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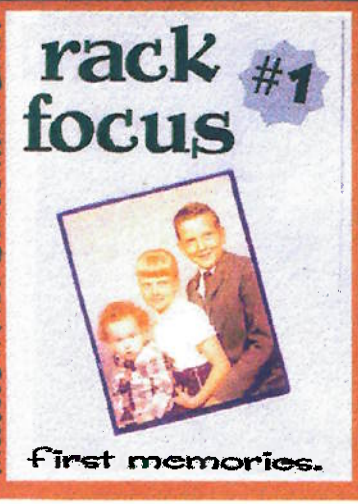
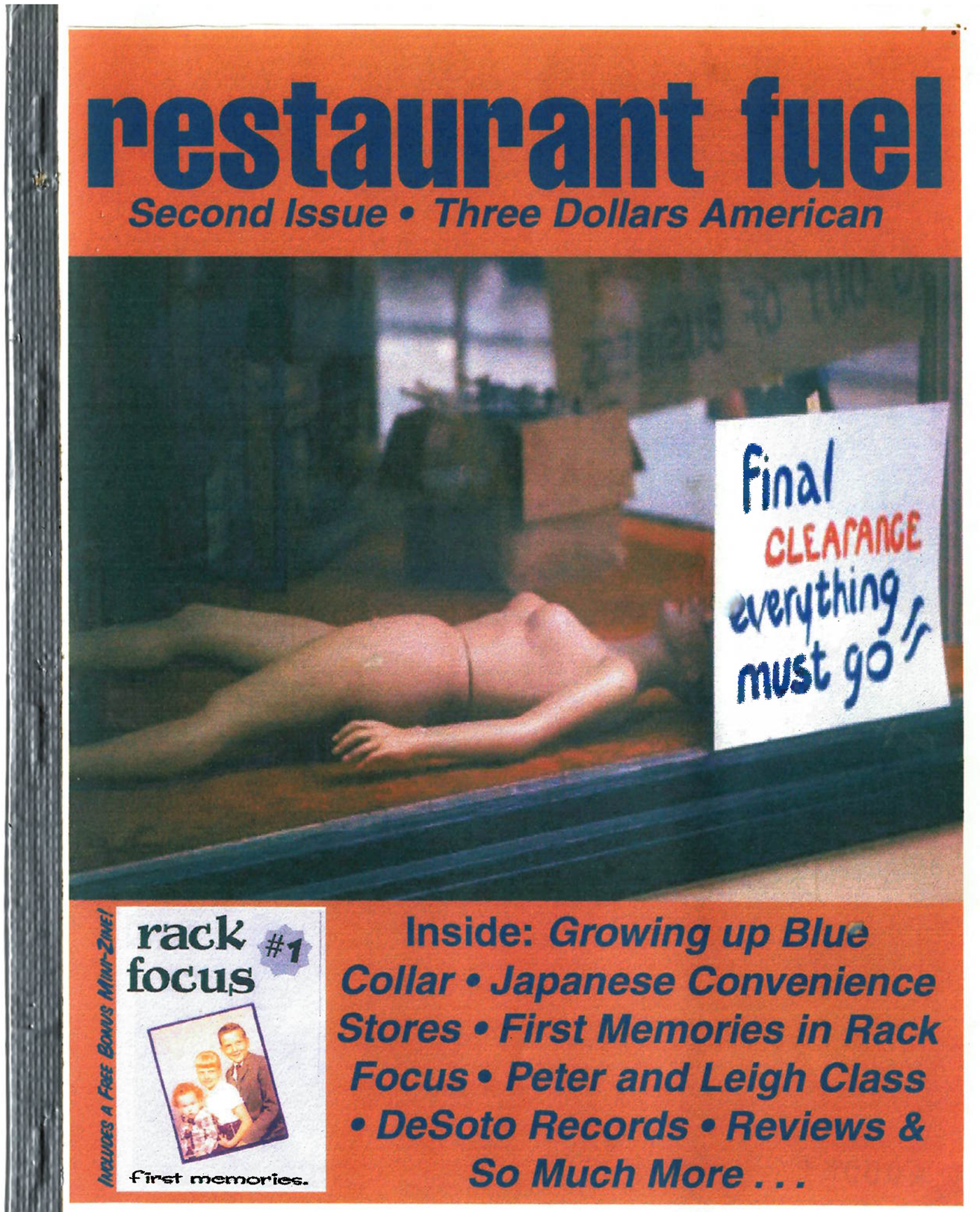


Inside: *Growing up Blue Collar • Japanese Convenience Stores • First Memories in Rack Focus • Peter and Leigh Class • DeSoto Records • Reviews & So Much More . . .*


restaurant fuel
Second Issue • Three Dollars American
Final
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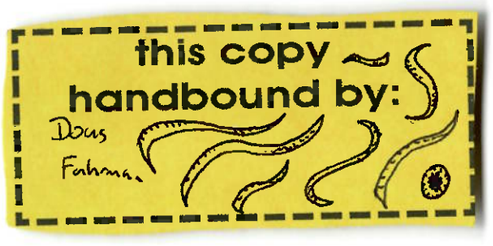
rack focus #1
first memories.
Inside: Growing up Blue Collar • Japanese Convenience Stores • First Memories in Rack Focus • Peter and Leigh Class • DeSoto Records • Reviews & So Much More . . .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rf zine

Issue Two

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Thanks to Jeff's Mom, Katrina Henry, Matt Wood and Beth Acord for helping out. Thanks also go to John Davis, Jeffrey Alexander, Mike *Caught In Flux*, Steve *Science Geek*, and Heidi Anne-Noel and Brian *Power Toot* who have all been very nice with their advice and assistance. Also thanks to Mikey Henry, 'cause he is restaurant fuel.

RF is currently distributed/sold by Spit and a Half, Yakuza mailorder, PowerToot mail-order, Magic Eye Singles, Shute Records, Go! Compact Discs and Tower Magazines.

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Write soon!

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welcome to the sophomore effort

A couple of months ago, I went to 7-Eleven to get a slurpee. Outside, there were a bunch of punk rock kids sitting around, smoking cigarettes, and playing around with their skateboards.

As I passed through the door, one of them shouted at me: "Excuse me, sir! But are you one of those Weezer-type slacker people?!"

"Huh?" I said, startled. "What're you talking about? Who the hell's Weezer?"

It took me a second to remember that Weezer were a Pavement rip-off that was pretty popular last year. Do I look like those guys? I wondered as I went inside the store. I glanced at my reflection in the glass – short hair, sideburns, Vans, navy blue workshirt. Jesus, did those kids really think I was one of those frat boys who listen to that shit? I was completely stunned. They must have.

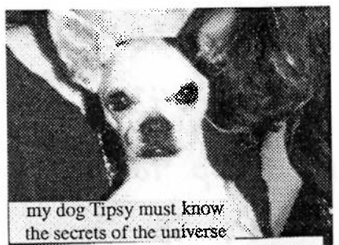
As I bought my slurpee, the same kid popped his head into the store. "Hey you fucking slacker!" he shouted at me, and raced away. I noticed that he was wearing a Goldfinger t-shirt.

I wanted to ask him if he knew about indie music, but I realized he probably didn't. He probably only learned about new bands by what was on MTV or displayed on the "New & Hot" rack at Waxie Maxies. It probably would have been like speaking a foreign language to him. I know, I've tried with other kids. They're so brainwashed into thinking that what they're listening to is honest music, they think indie records are the equivalent of demos. Or they don't know that they exist at all. And to think, when I was sixteen or so, punk rock was almost exclusively available on indies. Now, it's sadly not the case. And it seems that virtually none of the kids who call themselves "punk" can differentiate the good from the bad. Or the posers, from the people who are legitimately a part of the culture. Simmel's theory of art and culture was correct. Everything eventually gets co-opted.

this is Ginger, she gets an allergy shot every other day

By the way, this is the second issue of *Restaurant Fuel*. I hope you enjoy it. **-GJB**

Howdy & welcome to *RF* #2. I'm usually kinda negative about most everything, but today, I'm pretty excited about getting this issue done. There is this wonderful feeling that I get when I see a finished *RF*, this might seem funny and maybe a little pathetic, but I think that I literally fall in love with each issue. Not like, oh, I love this so much because it is so wonderful or anything like that, but more like, I love this because it is mine, because it's a product of my free time and my sensibilities.



my dog Tipsy must know the secrets of the universe

I don't know, maybe it's just that I need something to hold on to. Something to ground me since I am continually feeling out of place with the rest of the world. A world that I totally cannot relate to. A world that is so far removed from my life of going to shows and doing a zine and constantly looking for honesty or human feeling in everyday things.

From my little cubical at work, I can hear passing conversations in the hall or extended conversations from people in my department. And the things that they talk about make me feel alien and crazy for not caring. Staining furniture, going to weddings, buying new cars, exercising to lose 5 pounds, the Olympics, expensive clothes.

It all makes me angry and mean. Then there are the actual attacks from strangers who shout "fat" out of their car windows or the makeup women on the train who stare at the t-shirt I made. The one with a picture of my grandmother from 1940.

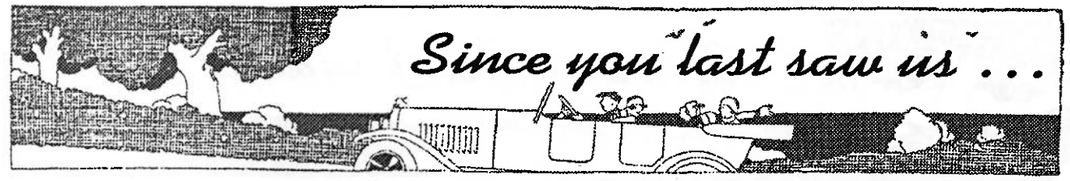
So *RF* sorta makes me feel better because it makes it so that I can meet people who might have the same ideals as me. People who won't talk to me about their new cars or some such materialistic crap.

As for this ish, there are fewer interviews; plus we left out the mail-order fleamarket and Career Day that were in #1. Sorry. That stuff will be back in issue 3. We got lots of personal stuff from friends who were really excited about *RF* and wanted to contribute. But, there is an extra mini-zine ziplocked inside that I did, which I think is pretty cool.

Oh yeah, we just got the new Danielle Howle CD, *About to Burst*, today and it totally made my day. It is so honest and beautiful. Check out track 10 to see what I mean.

We'll be back again in January. Until then, thanks.

— Tina

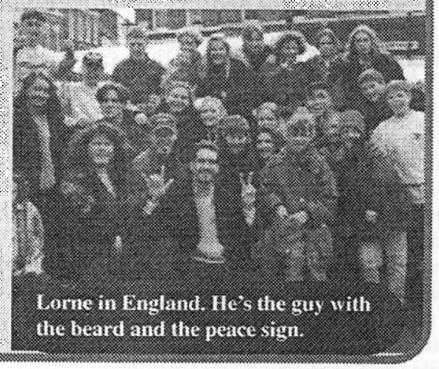


Lorne Digges Revisited

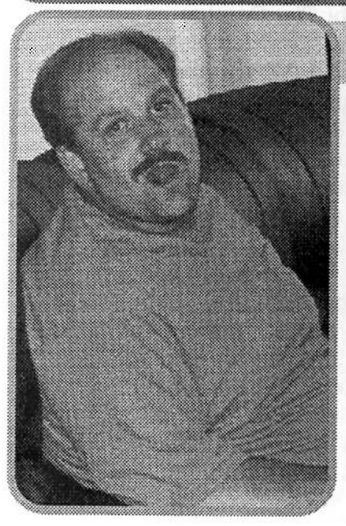
Though we haven't been in direct contact with Lorne Digges (the minister-in-training featured last issue), we have been in contact with his mom and managed to get some info on what he's up to.

He was in a pretty bad accident in January during the big blizzard that besieged the East Coast for what felt like the entire month. It wasn't his fault, but being young and having long hair had a negative effect on the cops who arrived at the scene. The woman who hit him was hysterical, so the cops took one look at him and automatically assumed it was his fault. In addition, he somewhat resembled an infamous Baltimore drug dealer they'd been looking for, so they threw him up against their car, cuffed him, and then tossed him in the back. They later found out that he wasn't the person they thought he was, but made no effort to apologize about the misunderstanding. He was released, still considered responsible for the accident, and suffered from some serious back problems. His car was also completely totalled.

In brighter news, Lorne is feeling better and even made a trip to England with his ministry group. They toured public schools and performed their repertoire of skits and dramas. In his last letter, Lorne told us that he's learned to tear phone books in half and break cinder blocks with his elbows. Soon, he says, he'll be able to break them with his fists and head! Sounds awfully painful to us, but it's a big part of his group's performance, so we're happy for him. ***—GJB***

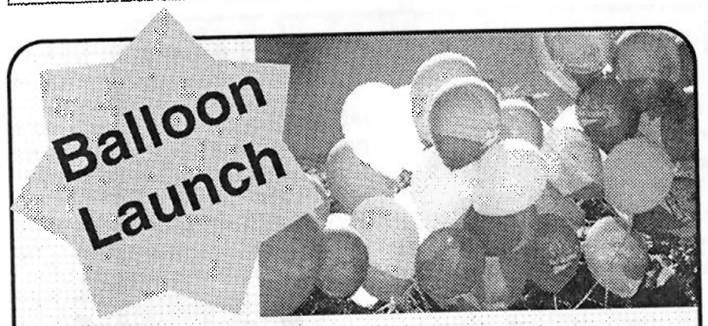


Lorne in England. He's the guy with the beard and the peace sign.



Career Day: Mike Henry Update

We thought that my dad would be mad when he found out that we were running the interview we did with him last ish. Jeff originally did the interview for a American Studies paper, but I knew all along that we'd use it in *RF*. We thought he wouldn't like it because he was talking shit about his boss, but he said it was the truth, so who cares. Anyway, in the last few months my dad has gone through a bout of bronchitis and chest pains. Not to mention that he needs knee surgery to fix torn cartilage and ligaments. He would have to be out of work for at least a month to recover. Things were all systems go for the operation to take place in August, hoping that the Family & Medical Leave Act would cover him, because he doesn't have disability pay at his work. Unfortunately, it does not as his job only has 4 employees and the act only covers work places with 50 or more employees. Although my dad is in constant pain and is limping, he is not going to get the operation after all. He says he can't afford it. I've been telling him that he'll end-up in a wheelchair if he doesn't take care of himself, but he's as stubborn as a bull. I'll keep ya informed. ***— Tina***



Having a 'zine is sort of like doing those balloon launches in elementary school. Remember them? You'd fill out your name and school address on a special tag, attach it to the tail of a helium balloon and then go out with your classmates into the playground and let them all go at once. Hopefully, someone nice would find yours and send it back to your school after filling out their side of the card, telling you their name, age and where they found it. It was kind of like a piece of you going somewhere you'd never been and coming back to tell you about it. Kids from my class got cards returned to them from as far away as South Carolina – however no one ever sent mine back, which made me a little sad at the time.

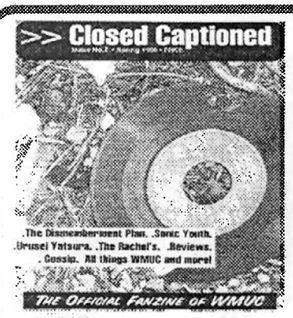
But that's okay, because *Restaurant Fuel* has been just like it. So far, we've gotten email from people in Ohio, California and Washington State – three places I've never been in my entire life. Each time someone contacts us, it's a shock. It's strange to think that somewhere I've never been, someone is reading something I've worked on. Cleveland, Ohio? We never knew we were being sold in Cleveland, Ohio . . .

If you've bought a copy of *Restaurant Fuel*, drop us a line (addresses on p. 2) to let us know where you bought it and what number you have. We're curious to find out where they're going, and what kind of places they're in. It's nice to know where pieces of you have been . . . — ***GJB***

The newest Magic Eye single is out and is supercool. This is the Gold single and it includes songs from Yesteryear, Samara Lubelski and Team Xiaoping (please see full details in the reviews section). Jeffrey Alexander is also in a new band called Science Kit. In the future we'll be seeing a Magic Eye Singles Comp CD with all of the singles plus other bonus tracks, the *For The Dead in Space* CD which is "a collection of artists interpreting the music of Tom Rapp and Pearls Before Swine" and not to mention the full-length from the Gold single's stand-out Yesteryear. Write to Jeffrey for a catalog, he's got great taste and is really good at what he does. Here's the address: **Magic Eye Singles, P.O. Box 6165, Baltimore, MD, 21231.** — ***Tina***

RF Contributors

M.E. Foley, who wrote last issue about staying in the states after all, is still here. On the other hand, Andy Smrz, who complained about his awful record store job, has moved to Minnesota for the summer to figure things out. He was hoping to be a street performer for awhile. Neither have been bowling lately. — ***Tina***



Closed Captioned

Recently, Tina and I volunteered our desk top publishing services with WMUC FM, the University of Maryland's freeform radio station as a way of doing our part to help out the station (hey, it sure beats cleaning!).

Working with editor-in-chief, John Davis (former editor of the *Slanted* 'zine), we assembled the contributions of the various DJs (including interviews with the Rachels, Urusei Yatsura, and Sonic Youth) into the *Closed Captioned* 'zine – a true bargain of a publication, because it's just bursting with good stuff to read, and it's absolutely free.

Though we're all out of the copies we had to distribute, you can still get *Closed Captioned* from WMUC. Send some stamps to: ***Closed Captioned* c/o WMUC Box 99, College Park, MD 20742-8431.** And if you're ever in the Washington, DC metro area, don't forget to tune in to WMUC at 88.1 on your FM Dial. — ***GJB***

On the cover last issue

Last issue's cover featured a picture of my dad and Uncle Dave from 1965. RF sorta inspired Uncle Dave to write up a little diatribe about his life currently. What he gave me ended up being your average zine rant about the state of this consumer culture that we live in. I thought it might be sorta nice to find something out about the grown-up he turned into. — ***Tina***

— — — — — — — — — —

Better writing pens, louder stereos, quieter cars. It never seems to fail, at least for me, no matter how much I have, no matter how many times I tell myself, "This is it, this is good enough..." POW! Right in the face of greed I fall again. It wasn't good enough. It wasn't fast enough. It's feeling didn't last enough. When does it all end? When will it be good enough? When can we expect to say "I am happy?"

In my thirty one years I have yet to come close. Do not ask me why — I did not put myself here on this Earth in the midst of this EVERYTHING IS NOT ENOUGH culture. I've asked people with age on them, and they tell me that i need "Christ" in my life. I've asked my peers — not a realistic quote can I write. Now I ask you to ponder on this, should I continue to perfect my worldly life or should I save every penny in the hopes of seeing an armored car in my funeral procession!?

So far life seems like a big race and just as you reach one finish line, another starter's pistol fires and you are off again. Why?

There must be more to life than running, running and running somewhere only to die and still not have had the question answered.

I don't believe it's the old, "no matter how much I cut it, it's too short" adage. I do believe there must be a heaven, because of all the hell I'm going through just trying to answer this life long question. — ***David Henry***

RFuel On the Web

We just put our web page up at: ***http://www.wam.umd.edu/~orpheus/rfmenu.html***

We update it about once a month with information on our production schedule, what we're including in our next issue, and other assorted news. There's also pictures of us up there, too, if you're interested in seeing just how goofy we really look. — ***GJB***

On the back cover last issue, we promised that a picture of Jeff's great-grandpa would be this ish's cover. We changed our minds, but here is the picture anyway.

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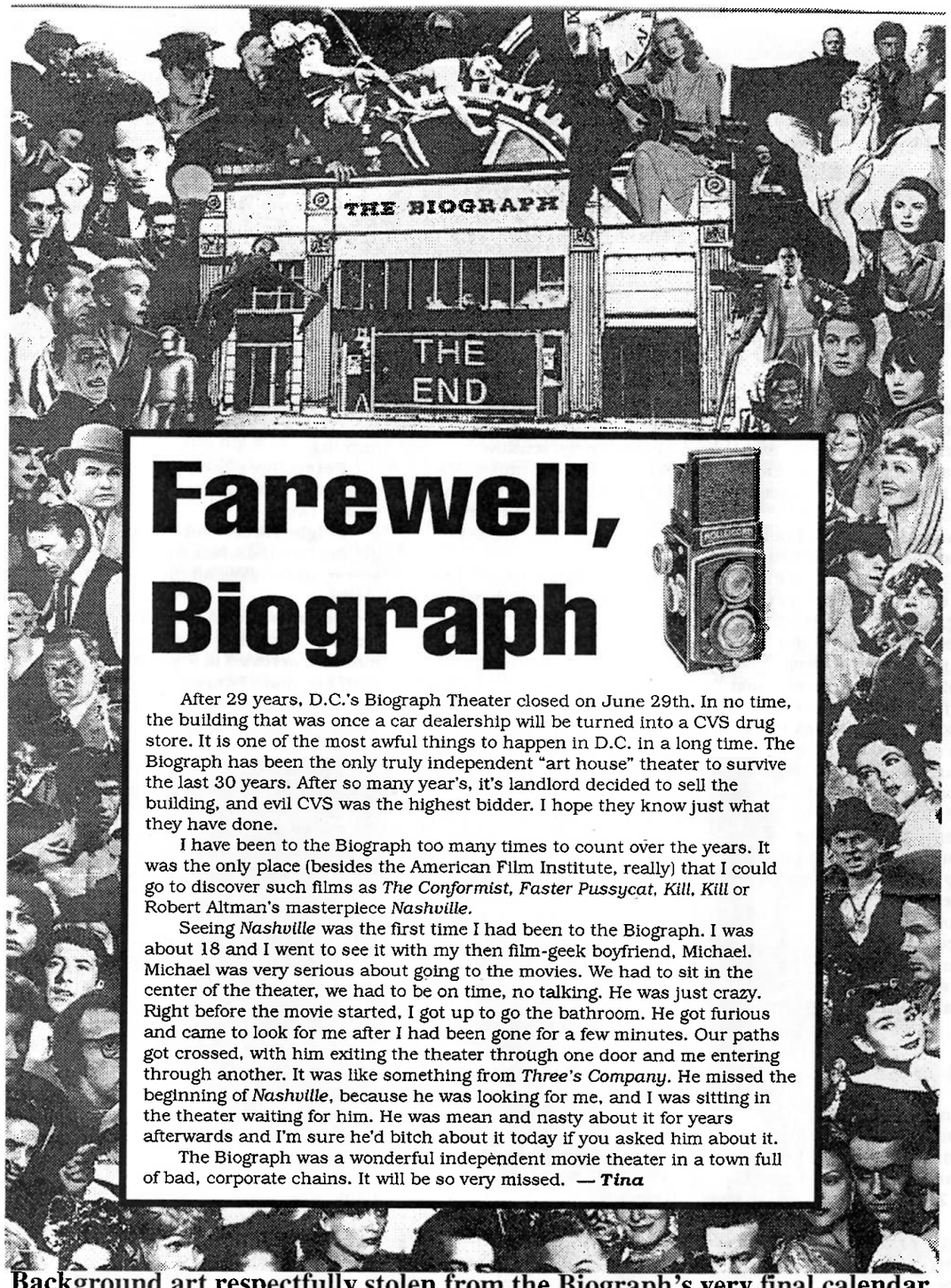

Farewell, Biograph

After 29 years, D.C.'s Biograph Theater closed on June 29th. In no time, the building that was once a car dealership will be turned into a CVS drug store. It is one of the most awful things to happen in D.C. in a long time. The Biograph has been the only truly independent "art house" theater to survive the last 30 years. After so many year's, it's landlord decided to sell the building, and evil CVS was the highest bidder. I hope they know just what they have done.

I have been to the Biograph too many times to count over the years. It was the only place (besides the American Film Institute, really) that I could go to discover such films as *The Conformist*, *Faster Pussycat, Kill, Kill* or Robert Altman's masterpiece *Nashville*.

Seeing *Nashville* was the first time I had been to the Biograph. I was about 18 and I went to see it with my then film-geek boyfriend, Michael. Michael was very serious about going to the movies. We had to sit in the center of the theater, we had to be on time, no talking. He was just crazy. Right before the movie started, I got up to go the bathroom. He got furious and came to look for me after I had been gone for a few minutes. Our paths got crossed, with him exiting the theater through one door and me entering through another. It was like something from *Three's Company*. He missed the beginning of *Nashville*, because he was looking for me, and I was sitting in the theater waiting for him. He was mean and nasty about it for years afterwards and I'm sure he'd bitch about it today if you asked him about it.

The Biograph was a wonderful independent movie theater in a town full of bad, corporate chains. It will be so very missed. — ***Tina***

Background art respectfully stolen from the Biograph's very final calendar.

PETER + LEIGH = CLASS

(The Artists formerly Known As Zaius)

An Interview by Jeff Barrus

Today, I applied the Double Agent temporary tattoo that the label's proprietor, Peter, sent me. It's sort of cool, having this simply rendered, yet ultra-neat rocketship on my wrist.

As an icon for Peter's Double Agent record label, the rocketship is pretty representative of the stuff he puts out. It's simple, yet striking, resembling both the imagined spacecraft of our more gentler past and the sleek interstellar vehicles we envision for our future. It's especially reminiscent of the songs Peter and his musical collaborator, Leigh put out as Class. With their sparkling, elegant guitars and soft, melancholy violins, they merge the most prominently used musical instrument of today with one of the most prominent ensemble instruments of our past.

Recently, I chatted with Peter and Leigh over the phone about their Class work, as well as the status of Peter's *Splashdown* 'zine, and Peter's plans for Double Agent label. Be on the look out for their debut 7", out soon on Double Agent in addition to all of the great stuff the two have put out thus far under their original name, Zaius. —***GJB***

Okay, I guess my first question is: how would y'all describe yourselves to someone who didn't know you?

Leigh: I would say mellow, acoustic . . .

Peter: Pretty, sensitive . . .

Leigh: Melodic music. It's really hard to explain to people, because when you tell them you're in a band they expect loud guitars . . .

Peter: And drums . . . But when people hear us, they are usually pleasantly surprised and say "Hey that's so pretty, I like it."

Leigh: Yeah, because it's kind of unusual now to have an acoustic guitar and violin.

Spare music isn't really common anymore save for the Mountain Goats and the Sentridoh stuff . . .

Peter: There are some people doing acoustic stuff, but I guess adding a violin . . . I guess it's pretty unusual to have a girl in an acoustic band too, because when I think about it all the acoustic bands I know are just guys with acoustic guitars.

Tina and I were thinking about it the other day . . .

Peter: Except for the Softies.

Yeah, but they're like the exception to everything. Anyway, how did you guys first get interested in music.

Peter: Playing music?

Playing music and interested in indie music in particular.

Leigh: Well, I've been playing instruments for like all my life. That's been kind of ongoing.

Peter: She's been playing piano and violin since she was ... two?

Leigh: Three. But Peter got me into the whole indie scene, so he takes all the credit.

Peter: We met during our freshman year, and I was already interested in 7"s and stuff like that. I dunno, I think that in our band, though, it doesn't really matter what music we're into.

Leigh: You can't really tell apart from the covers that we do.

Peter: Exactly. I like a lot of the stuff like the Field Mice and the Softies, and Leigh happens to like Blur and Elastica and stuff like that, but our music doesn't really represent what we're listening to right now.

Leigh: I don't think so.

Peter: Yeah, so as far as guitar goes, in ninth and tenth grade a lot of friends of mine started to join bands and get guitars and stuff. I was in a Cure cover band . . .

Leigh: Tell him what the name was.

Peter: Oh yeah, we were called "Deliverance".

(Chuckles) "Deliverance"?

Peter: It was pretty bad.

(Now entering his newborn music geek phase) What do you guys record on?

Peter: I have a four track, and Tony (my housemate, from Papas Fritas) has a four track too, so what we've been doing is using all the tracks on my four track and then mixing it down onto one track on the other one and then we have three more to work with, so it's basically seven tracks ... sometimes more if we ping-pong.

How did you guys work the samples into your songs?

Peter: I plugged the VCR into my tape deck and recorded it onto a cassette tape and then plugged the stereo into my four track. Once it's on the four track you can get rid of the hiss.

I'm always interested in how people pull things off without some of the more expensive equipment.

Peter: Once you plug it in you can just lower the high EQ all the way down and it basically cuts off the hiss. That Planet of the Apes song, "29th Scroll, 6th Verse" took me awhile to do — I had to do it twice until I figured out how to finally reduce the hiss enough.

Why did you guys decide to change your name from Zaius to Class?

Leigh: Peter brought up the issue that Zaius kind of sounds like a heavy metal band.

Peter: And also when I first started Zaius, I bought a Four track just because I wanted to try to play around with different recording techniques — when you play by yourself it's hard to imagine another guitar part on top it, so I got a four track so I could play two parts. I just made a tape of four songs, and I was like "I'll just choose a name for fun." So I chose Zaius because I was really into Planet of the Apes. Then some people looking for some songs for compilations asked if I was in a band, I sent them that tape, and then it kind of took off a little bit. I never thought that Zaius was an awesome name, I just chose it for fun, not expecting to get any recognition.

Leigh: It's also really hard for people to pronounce.

Peter: Yeah, nobody knows how to pronounce it. Two nights ago I was at a Stereolab show and this kid comes up and says: "I hear you changed your name, and that you're not Zye-oos anymore."

Not a lot of people are familiar with Planet of the Apes.

Peter: Exactly. And, there's another band called Doctor Zaius, and I just figured that if I'm not psyched about the name, we might as well change it before we actually release our own 7".

Where does the name Class come from?

Peter: Well, we were thinking of a new name, and I would say all these names that were really poetic and Leigh would say all these names that were really cute. I had a whole list of names, and I kept thinking "I don't want something cute, I want something classy." So one day I just called Leigh and was like "How about Class" and she said "Okay."

Are you going to record anything soon under that name.

Peter: Yeah, we're recording right now for this compilation I'm doing on Double Agent, this eighties compilation — did I tell you about it?

I don't think I've heard about it, yet.

Peter: It's eight bands and they're all doing covers of songs from the eighties. And then we're recording for a Field Mice tribute compilation on a Spanish label, as well as a few new songs for a 7" this summer.

Are you ever going to do a long player on Double Agent?

Peter: Maybe, one day. Well, Leigh's going to go to England for six months, so I figured what we'll do is record a 7" this summer, and while she's in England it'll come out and I'll write songs, and then when she comes back we'll see where we both live and stuff like that. It's kinda scary — see we like to do covers, but I wouldn't want to put covers on a real album. I think right now we're learning how to write songs better and using the two four tracks. I wouldn't want to put an album out at this point, not until I felt I was a matured musician.

Leigh: Until we get more original material.

What are you guys listening to now — what bands are you into?

Peter: Well today I listened to every Blueboy record, because I made someone a Blueboy tape.

Leigh: I listened to Lush and Elastica . . .

Peter: We listened to Bis together. . .

Leigh: We joke about how we'd like to be like Bis, but I don't think that'll ever happen — we need a drummer.

Peter: Yeah, if I was in a band with drums, I'd want to sound like Bis, but Class isn't that excessive.

You could add a drummer and the band would still be Class, sort of.

Peter: Well, right now I'm happy as we are. To add drums would mean we'd have to rock, and I don't have it in me to rock right now. I've thought about getting a drum machine, though.

Well Pam Berry's stuff is very soft, yet she still has percussion.

Peter: Glo-Worm type stuff?

Yeah like Glo-Worm, except they just used a snare drum.

Peter: Yeah, I was thinking about that, but it's such a pain to learn how to record drums. I would just rather not deal with that right now, I've already got two bands to coordinate.

Are you guys both still in college?

Peter: No, we just graduated in May.

Did it take you four years?

Peter: Yeah.

Cool, everyone else I know — including me — has taken like five or more.

Peter: I just wanted to get it over with.

What did you study?

Peter: I majored in Anthropology and minored in Studio Art.

Leigh: I majored in English.

Have you found jobs yet?

Leigh (chuckling): No.

Peter: I have, I work at this place designing web sites. Freelancing, too.

Do you plan on doing* Splashdown *again?

Peter: I dunno. I was thinking about it — I'd first thought of doing it on the web, but then I realized that not enough people have access to the web. Plus, I like that people can carry around the tangible format. But, I dunno — there's not that many bands that I feel really passionate about interviewing right now. Some new, fresh bands that I'd maybe want to interview are Bis, but they already get a lot of press, or My Favorite, but I've already interviewed them. Maybe Flowchart. I could interview the Softies, because I know them, but it would feel funny asking them questions.

Yeah, I guess that could seem kind of silly asking fannish questions to people you're friends with. Have you guys played out yet?

Leigh: Oh, no. Peter has on his own, but not with me.

Peter: That was when I first did that four song tape. I'd like to play live, but we've got eight tracks with two people, so how are we going to pull that off? I have friends who have offered to play other parts — but I like to double my vocals sometimes, but I guess I could just add reverb . . . I dunno, I'd be nervous, too — it's hard for me to play and sing at the same time! I think that I would screw up.

Leigh: We'd have to spend a lot more time practising.

Peter: Like I said, I feel like we're just beginning, and I don't want to rush.

Why did you decide to put "Never Coming Backwards" on* Punky's Dilemma, *uhm . . . well, backwards?

Peter: Well what happened was there's a song I wrote a few years ago called "Never Coming Back", which Leigh sang on, that I recorded. I did it on my four track, and it was the first thing I recorded. Do you know about four tracks - do you have one?

Nope, I'm just barely starting to learn guitar.

Peter: Well, when you record on a four track, it uses both sides of the tape. I didn't know that, so when it was over, I flipped it over and started recording something else. When I played it back, that's what it was - it was "Never Coming Backwards" — and I couldn't figure out what was going on. Later I found out that I'd recorded it all wrong. But we liked how it sounded, and since the *Punky's Dilemma* wasn't a big deal, we figured we'd might as well just throw it on there.

Leigh: Did you like it?

It was kind of a neat surprise.

Leigh: A lot of people don't like it.

It sounds Satanic, actually.

Leigh: Yeah, it's kinda creepy.

It's a shock. You hear these really soft songs, and then there's this strange thing — it reminds me a little of Tortoise.

Peter: It is strange, running backwards, but I think it's interesting. I originally thought I'd put it at the very end so people could just stop when they get to it, but I like "Learned Helplessness" at the end.

Is "Greys" autobiographical?

Peter: I wish.

(Chuckles all around)

Peter: Actually, "Greys" I started off with completely different lyrics. And then this kid, Mike, asked me to write a song for this label that he's starting called Hello Spaceman. So I was like: "Hey, why don't I write a 'spaceman' type song?" So I started in the middle of work on that song, and I just changed all the lyrics. But the 7" still hasn't come out, and it was set for September, so I doubt it's going to come out — it was supposed to be a split with Bunnygrunt, 6cents and Natalie, and Mike's band. But I think I'll just end up releasing "Greys" myself on Double Agent.

It would be a cool 7". "Greys" is definitely a better song than anything on that awful X-Files compilation CD. Yuck!

Peter: Thanks. I think that some of the stuff on the tape should be heard by more than the fifty people who own it.

The covers are cool in the sense that you're getting an entirely new song through interpretation.

Leigh: The song that we're doing right now for the eighties compilation is completely different than the original. We're doing Jermaine Stewart's "We Don't Have To Take Our Clothes Off", which was originally a dance song.

Peter, do you still read 'zines? Do you still pick them up?

Peter: I usually get them sent to me because of my own fanzine. I dunno, I'm glad to see that a lot of people are investing more time in them with desktop publishing and stuff. It's hard to read when they're written in circles and upside down and stuff. There are some that I do like to read.

Which ones?

Peter: I like *Power Toot* — get a lot of 'zines, so I pick out interviews here and there that I like.

Are you guys doing anything else musically besides Class?

Peter: I'm in a band with the Softies called the Ovalteens. When they were on tour they came here and they got snowed in. So we didn't have anything to do, so we decided to form our own band. We've recorded two songs already, and I'm going to go out to Portland this summer to record some more songs to put on a Double Agent 7".

What's going to come out soon on Double Agent?

Peter: Well there's that eighties compilation I mentioned before, coming out with eight bands — the Softies, Tullycraft, My Favorite, Push Kings, Class, Bunnygrunt, Holiday, and #Poundsign#. I'm also going to be doing a 7" for the Push Kings — a band from Harvard, and the Ovalteens 7".

Thanks for taking the time to talk to us! ✤

CLASS

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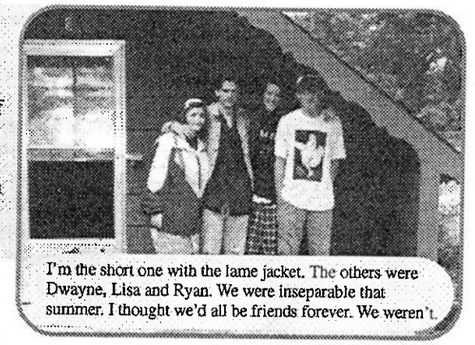
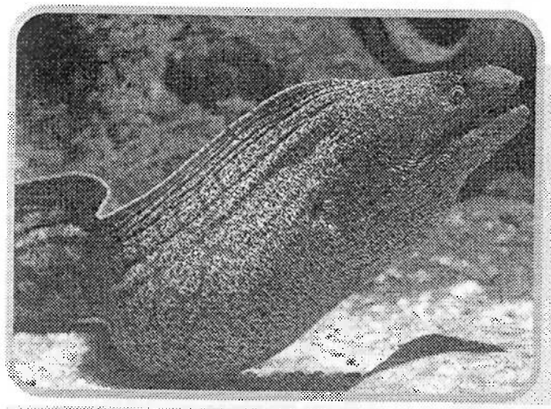
eel farm

by tina

About five years ago, my friends and I went on a 14 day road trip up through New England, to Canada and back to Maryland. We spent months planning it. The agenda included a lot of silly stuff from America's Stonehenge to an eel farm that we read about in a free things to do in America book. The eel farm was at the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. Not only was it free, but it was open 24 hours, 7 days a week. Imagine our excitement!



I'm the short one with the lame jacket. The others were Dwayne, Lisa and Ryan. We were inseparable that summer. I thought we'd all be friends forever. We weren't.



I'm not sure what I expected; I guess just a big scary pool of eels. But the thought of eels growing out of the ground was equally as funny. We headed out from our motel room at about 9 p.m. on a Sunday to find the building on the Bridgeport campus where the eels were waiting for us. Once on campus, Bridgeport seemed a dark & scary place, and there didn't seem to be any names on the buildings. We began to get a little leery when a thunderstorm started.

At what we thought might be the building, we parked next to a police car (the only sign of life we had seen so far). We walked around a bit, but couldn't find a front entrance to the building, just a side door. We heard what sounded like a scream, someone yelling.... so we ran back to the car, spooked.

Out burst a cop from the side door of the building, he started yelling at us. "What are you doing," he screamed.

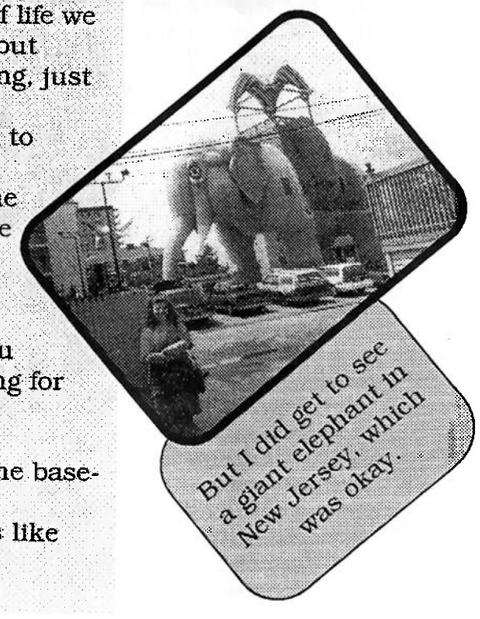
Ryan, the driver yelled back, "Looking for the eel farm!"

The cop lightened up, "Oh, I thought you were stealing my squad car ... you're looking for the EAGLE farm?"

All of us laughing, "No, EEL farm!"

Cop: "Oh, eel farm. That used to be in the basement of this building like 7 or 8 years ago!"

Apparently our Free America book was like 9 years old. No eels.



But I did get to see a giant elephant in New Jersey, which was okay.

A Chat With Bill Barbot of DeSoto Records and Jawbox

by Jeff Barrus

Cars have never been a big interest of mine, but for some reason, DeSoto Records' car-inspired name struck me as ingenius. Perhaps it's the image of the humungous rusting automobiles of old that does it, or the reference to our less worrysome past that does it. I don't know, really – but I do like the name quite a bit.

Recently, I emailed some questions to Jawbox guitarist Bill Barbot, who along with Jawbox bassist Kim Coletta, runs DeSoto. Among the things I wanted to learn were details about the label's name and history, info on their current and upcoming releases, and the scoup on who is responsible for their wonderful and often intriguing album art. In addition, I slipped in a few questions about Jawbox and putting out records on a major label.

Enjoy. *-GJB*

How did you and Kim come to start running DeSoto? Is it true that DeSoto was originally Edsel's label?

The "name" was started by Edsel, but it was never really an official entity as a label until Kim and I put out the Candy Machine record. Edsel released their own single, and had to give their "label" a name. In keeping with the car theme, they chose DeSoto. When Jawbox released their first EP, they asked Edsel if they could keep the DeSoto name going by using it for the Dischord split. But a couple of years of inactivity intervened before we put out the Candy Machine EP, got J to design a logo, and opened a bank account.

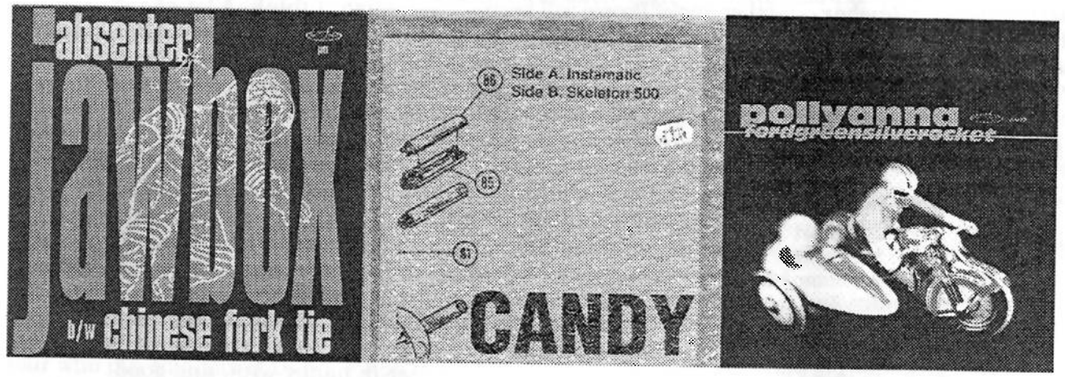
How did you find out about Pollyanna and Big Heavy Stuff, originally? Will you be releasing their longplayers? Will they be touring in the States any time soon?

Both bands had been fans of our music for a while; Nick Kennedy, the fantastic drummer of Big Heavy Stuff, worked in the coolest record shop in Sydney and pushed Jawbox records on everyone who came through the door. However, it was Pollyanna who first wrote us and sent us their first CD EP. They weren't looking for a release, just being friendly. Shortly after, they sent us their second EP. Kim and I were so impressed that we wanted to release both EPs domestically on one CD. Unfortunately, we didn't have the resources to pull that off. A few weeks later, we finally heard from Big Heavy Stuff, who are managed by Sarah Longhurst, Pollyanna's manager. They sent their two EPs, and Kim and I were again blown away by Sarah's good taste in music. We decided to do two "companion" singles, with similar art styles to introduce these bands to America. They are working on putting a US tour together, but first they both really need a domestic label to put out their full-lengths.

DeSoto might try to oblige them ... if only we had all day and a ton of money to work on this stuff!

Who do you get to do the design work on your records? It's definitely eyecatching (particularly the Pollyanna and Big Heavy Stuff singles, and the Dismemberment Plan LP).

J. of Jawbox is our design maestro; we wanted to go with our first full-color single jackets with the two Aussie 7"s, so after a lot of brainstorming about how to make them similar but different, we came up with the tin toy idea. J took the pictures and put them all together. They were printed by Thingmakers in Seattle, who did a great job with the jackets.



The Plan record was designed by their singer/guitarist Travis Morrison.

What records are y'all into right now? What's on the DeSoto turntable?

If only we had a turntable in the office! All we have is a CD/cassette/radio box. I've been listening non-stop to the unmastered Big Heavy Stuff cassette; twenty songs of pure magnificence. I'm listening to A *Taste of Tradition Vol. 2* right now; it's a sampler of old blues on Tradition records. Also, Tanner, *Ill-gotten Gains*; Polvo, *Exploded Drawing*; Sparklehorse, *Vivadixiesubmarine* ... *etc.*; The Scientists, *Absolute*; Fred Schneider, *Just ... Fred*; Failure, *Magnified*.

How big of a response do you get from your web page? It's almost like a web-'zine for DeSoto/Jawbox with its frequent updates and essays.

That was the idea; I hated having to rely entirely on the press for news about DeSoto. Some zines I take out ads in don't go to press until almost a year after I send them the ad; the web is a very immediate way to let people know about our new stuff, what we think, what we stand for, what we like and when we're all going to be in town. The web is only interesting as long as it's dynamic; when it becomes like a book filled with advertisements, it gets boring really quickly. The response we've gotten has been great. People really appreciate having something new to read everytime they drop in. I also enjoy sounding off all the time, without having to pay for paper or go to the Kinko's!

What records are you planning on releasing soon? Will they be full DeSoto releases, or splits with other labels?

We're working on two splits that are certain right now; we are doing the new Shiner CD as a split with Hit It! records in Chicago, and the new Candy Machine record as a split with Xmas Records from LA. As members of Jawbox, Kim and I will be spending most of this year on the road, which makes it very difficult to be a good label to our bands with new records out. By working with these other labels, it gives us the freedom to be involved in the projects while giving them a more stable home base at the other labels.

Who runs DeSoto while you're gone on tour? Is there anyone left behind to answer your mail and handle the business stuff in your abscence?

Our fantastic assistant Melissa takes care of everything when we're gone. There are some administrative things that only Kim or I can deal with, but the day-to-day operations are handled by Melissa when we're gone.

With Jawbox, how much control do you have over your videos and promotion?

From your web page, it looks like you designed the sets for your next video yourselves. (Is it the video for "Mirrorful", or am I just remembering things wrong?)

Yes, the video is "Mirrorful," and I designed the thing in conjunction with our director, Courtney Holt. We have the contractual right to design our artwork and our videos, as well as approval over all marketing, promotional materials, and advertisements. Pretty much nothing is done with our band without our approval.

How cool is Atlantic with you putting out the Jawbox record on vinyl yourselves? Do you have to deal with any of the business entanglements other bands do? I've heard of a few bands who couldn't even release 7"s because their labels didn't want them to.

Again, we have the contractual rights to release the vinyl of our records on the indie of our choice, as well as the full release (CD and vinyl) on the indie of our choice in Europe and Australia (where we work with City Slang and Mushroom, respectively). They knew what they were getting into when we signed, so they don't have any complaints. We're allowed to put out a single a year automatically on any indie; more are by negotiation. The amount of business they lose as a result of vinyl and single sales is negligible to them, but important to us.

What kind of questions did you get from the music press once you banned the "Are you still friends with Ian MacKaye type questions"? I seem to remember every single interview I read with you when* For Your Own Special Sweetheart *came out had something to do with that (I found it kind of annoying). Could they come up with anything more creative?

Well, it seems that everyone wants an angle, and for our first major label record, the "indie-vs-major" angle was interesting, at least for a month or two. We banned those type of questions because we'd like to talk about our music and our band, not our frigging record label. But until we start wearing spacesuits or claiming to be from the interior of the planet, we're not sexy enough for any other angle. People will keep writing about the obvious thing.

With the new record, will there be any EP's to coincide with the release (like* Savory*)?

No. We decided that the "Savory" EP was a little distracting from the album, so we decided to just focus our money and attention on one release this time. Bonus tracks will just show up in different places this time.

How collaborative is the songwriting on the new record? I remember that with* Sweetheart *it seemed like the songwriting was beginning to include everyone in the band.

It did, and still does. We've gotten very good at exploiting one another's strengths in the writing process.

How does a major label band go about picking a single? How much of the decision is yours, how much is the label's?

The decision is entirely ours, but it's in our interest to pick a single that the people at the label will be comfortable working with. It doesn't benefit us to pick a completely non-commercial song to be the single, because the radio people at the label won't be able to help us.

Why does MTV choose not to play videos by certain bands? Is it MTV's decision? The band's? Lack of promotion on the part of the label? Do you know if they're going to play the first video for the new record?

No, we never know exactly how the process works. It's all very "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours," though, I think. A lot of insider deal making.

It's all very sleazy. Sometimes it's a result of a failure on the label's part, often a failure on MTV's part to challenge their audience, and sometimes even a failure of the band/director to make a video "appropriate" to MTV. MTV has a stylistic stranglehold on major-label video-making, which sucks. I like to think that we make a video we're happy with, and good for MTV if they like it.

Are you looking forward to touring? When you're gone for so long, do you ever get to come home, or are you just constantly on the road?

We still like to tour, despite the fact that it gets harder everytime, because we're so involved with the management of our band (not to mention our label!). Playing our songs in front of people is 33% of what we do (the other two-thirds are writing songs and recording them), so it is still an integral part of our lives. Once we leave, we almost never come home until the job is done. ✤

Eric Hilton

Jimmy Askew chats with the local Acid Jazz DJ who runs two of DC's most interesting clubs

What happens to indie rockers who get bored with guitars?

The quick answer is to look at people like Tortoise or Labradford, bands with extensive rock credentials in their past who have moved into other realms. Another arena people are finding is that of the DJ, especially the Acid Jazz DJ. Marked by its diverse influences, Acid Jazz has begun to show up in the indie rock world with increasing frequency. U.N.K.L.E., a DJ for London's Mo'Wax records, has remixed both Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and Tortoise tracks. Money Mark, the organist/keyboardist for the Beastie Boys has released a slew of singles and a full-length on that same label. Trans Am recently brought a DJ on their North American tour who played a mix of Dub and Rare Soul grooves.

With all this cross-pollination taking place, it seemed like a good time to speak with Eric Hilton, local Acid Jazz DJ and entrepreneur. Eric runs the 18th Street Lounge and Red, two of DC's most interesting clubs. The Lounge is by far DC's premier Acid Jazz club. Open six nights a week, it has established itself as the best club in town to dance all night or relax with a cigar and a Gin and Tonic while listening to everything from 70s funk to the latest London DJ.

Red opened on June 1st of this year just around the corner from the Lounge, mainly as a dance club but also as a space for live performances one night a week. This interview took place one rainy July afternoon on a break from his mixing what will eventually become the fourth Thievery Corporation 12".

RF: How exactly would you define Acid Jazz for somebody who has no idea what it is?

EH: I'm not an authority on Acid Jazz but I've been into the music that kind of spawned Acid Jazz in a way since High School or even before. I don't know if you're familiar with the early British Pop Jazz scene with Style Council or Everything But The Girl and Animal Night Life.

RF: Most of what I know of Acid Jazz came from around here. About four years ago Fifth Column had a really good night every week with Techno on the mainfloor and Acid Jazz in the "bass-ment" but at the time that sounded basically like hip-hop to me.

EH: See that's the thing, a lot of places, especially places in New York, can have "Acid Jazz" nights but they're really just hip-hop nights because there is a lot of "Jazz-Hip-Hop," like Gangstarr, Guru did Jazzmatazz...

RF: Digable Planets...

EH: Yeah...see, I love hip-hop but I hate rap. I'm so sick of people talking shit over beats. It's just gibberish, I hate it. I even produce a semi-rap project right now but I'm probably gonna be getting out of it because I hate the rap part of it. The rappers are nice guys, I just don't like it. I never have.

RF: Yeah, I know what you mean because I meet people at work every day where it's like "Hey, you're nice but I don't like your band, sorry."

EH: Especially for dance-oriented music I like instrumental. Vocals, that's more for rock or something. As far as Acid Jazz, the official story I think is in '87 or early '88 this DJ in London by the name of Giles Peterson, who you may have heard of, he owns the Talking Love label and puts out Straight no Chaser (an Acid Jazz magazine). He was DJING Brazilian music and Jazz with rare grooves and stuff on a radio station in London. The craze back then was Acid House, so he was like "If that's Acid House, then this is Acid Jazz." He was just making a joke but people dug it and the term somehow stuck. It's almost unfortunate because the term turns off a lot of people.

Just the two words together are very alienating for a lot of people. "Acid Jazz, what the hell is that?" It sounds like it's going to sound like cacophonous junk. I think what it is, it's an attitude within music, and kind of vibe. It's an attitude of eclecticism and open-mindedness, especially eclecticism in terms of not only styles but actually cultures. Cultural influences like Brazilian or African music...

RF: Like the Up Bustle and Out record which just came out...

EH: Sure.

RF: ...which is just totally fantastic. A lot of the Ninja Tune and Instinct stuff is good, but the Up Bustle and Out is so nice simply because it puts so much together.

EH: It's very interesting, that's a great project. That's like a quintessential Acid Jazz attitude.

RF: So how did you first start with your own stuff and getting involved with music and acid jazz?

EH: As far as music, I was in a Ramones-like garage band when I was eleven or twelve in Potomac. I played guitar, my friend played drums and his brother played bass (his brother was like nine years old). We recorded our first little EP onto eight-track tape...We were influenced by heavy metal bands like Foghat and people like that, but we were playing such simple stripped-down stuff that was very Ramones-like. I played in a couple of failed hardcore/punk groups in high school- one called Thrash Faction which nobody remembers...as far as DJING, I kind of made a switch in musical tastes when I discovered soul, Old Soul, Rare Soul, and the Mod Movement.

I got heavily into the Mod Movement and DJed all these Mod shows, and played Rare Soul and Northern Soul, Booker T and stuff like that. I dug on that for a while, then I got out of DJING. Later, this British guy I knew who was DJING at Fifth Column got in touch with me. It was very odd, I had a sense that I could DJ House Music but I only had a few records. I was thinking about calling this guy, and strangely enough, the day I was going to call him, he called me and one thing led to another and I ended up DJING at Fifth Column when it first opened about seven years ago. I played House, and sometimes downstairs Hip-Hop. It was fun because House was new and unique, but after a couple of years I got out of that. I've sort of taken these two-year sabbaticals from DJING. I never thought I'd DJ again, but when we opened this place we really didn't know anybody who would play the styles of music we were into, so Farid and I just decided we'd DJ ourselves.

RF: How exactly did 18th Street Lounge come about? It seemed like all of the sudden, it was just here. I heard about it, but never came for the longest time because I run in this indie-rock crowd which just goes to shows and coffee shops all the time.

EH: Well, that is the indie-rock thing to do, it's very nineties.

RF: It is, but at the same time it's not because a lot of the people I know are getting more and more into Acid Jazz stuff like Ninja Tune and Mo'Wax, I even see it happening with myself.

EH: It's good music. I think the cool thing about especially Ninja Tune and Mo'Wax (sort of the Trip-Hop genre, where Thievery Corporation fits in) is that it's interesting in that it's studio-based and it's cut and paste. It's so different from the indie-rock thing, it's not better or worse...

RF: It's just different.

EH: Right. My comment on the indie-rock thing is that format has been around since the mid-1960s with the Troggs and the "Original Punk Bands." It's cool, but it's so limiting that it's unbelievable.

There's not much that a band can do with a couple of melodies and a guitar and bass and a set of drums. I'm so sick of hearing just plain drums. That's why I love working on Trip-Hop because you throw together a few loops and take a snare from here and there and the rhythms you get are so much more interesting, they draw you in more. I wish there was that whole scene that kind of blew up for two years in Manchester in the early 1990s with the Happy Mondays and The Farm where they were taking loops but playing rock songs over them.

But it just died out- Beck did it on his first song, he took a simple Hip-Hop loop, really. But without it, I don't think that "I'm a loser baby" song would have done anything. I think if some of these indie-rock bands would pull their head out of the sand for a few seconds and incorporate other types of music...

RF: Well there is Tortoise...

EH: I heard about that Trans Am group too.

RF: Have you seen them yet?

EH: No, but I heard they're pretty interesting.

RF: They're really good, they just put out a twelve-inch EP on this label Happy Go Lucky. They do a lot of stuff, they use samplers and keyboards but at the same time they have this total rock structure too. They go between this full-on rock sound to what's almost Techno, a lot of people have been turned off by their EP because it sounds so Techno to them.

EH: I'm into groups like that which try to incorporate different technologies into their sound.

RF: The Kranky label does that too.

EH: I haven't heard of them.

RF: They have sort of a Too-Pure analogue synth vibe but more experimental. So tell me about Thievery Corporation and Exodus Quartet.

EH: The first one I was involved with was Exodus Quartet. It was my like "solo project." It's me writing and producing music of different styles- everything from Bossanova to like cop-show sounding stuff or even more mainstream jazz-funk. That's there mainly because the label (Instinct) wants that every once in a while- I'm pretty cooperative and I like working with the label because they sell lots of records and they're okay. So I acquiesce and give them a "radio-friendly song." The whole project was born out of this party called Exodus which featured Acid Jazz at what is now Bravo Bravo at Connecticut and K...in 1990, though, there weren't that many Acid Jazz records so we eventually

decided to make our own. We went into the studio and made up an EP which contained the song "A Perfect Vibe"which did really well. Everybody loved that song- it was even the theme song for an ESPN snowboarding special. It got licensed a lot of times. The album comes out next week...on the other hand, Thievery Corporation is pretty much exactly what the name suggests. It's just ton of samples and I could never do it for one of these small labels because they couldn't clear all the samples. It's our exploration of the whole Trip-Hop, Ambient and electronic music realm. We try to make a lot of sound with very little- we have a few workstations and keyboards and effects units. Our studio is really bare-bones but we can get a lot of sound of it.

RF: I really like the first 12" a lot because it sounds so smooth, like being in the club.

EH: Interestingly enough, we've been picking up the tempo lately to where it's like the tempo of Shaolin (the second 12") which is 102 (BPM). That's where we play most of the night is 100-102. I'm still really partial to that slow, hard dubby sound.

RF: It took me a while to get into the second one because it is faster, I guess I just expected more of that slow sound.

EH: The first one is pretty special to me not only because it's the first one but also since it was a record I had in my head for a while and when Rob (Garza) and I got together to do it, it just came together really well. What's interesting though is that Shaolin has done better than the first one. And the third one is really accessible and lots of people will like it. People are really loving that one- what's next? We're going to start doing music we don't like that people like even more? That'll never happen, but you get the idea.

RF: Let's talk about Red.

EH: Red came about because we had an idea to open up a place which was basically just four walls and a system. No gimmickry, the emphasis would not be on the bar but rather on this space with a really good sound system.

We were going to do this earlier, but had the opportunity to do the Lounge which we preferred. Shortly after, we came across this space that was close so we said "Hey, let's do it." Really, Red is for explorations into underground dance music. We have a jungle night starting soon, and we play really deep underground house on the weekends. Producers play, it's the people who produce the records are the DJ. It's not Joe Shmoe who has a few house records and discovered the music six weeks ago. These guys have been doing it since the 1980s, Sam Burns and 95 North and the Basement Boys from Baltimore have come down. They're all House veterans. They know what the real deal is.

RF: Yeah, I'd noticed that Red is a lot more House than the Lounge. I had heard that Red was going to be a lot more Trip-Hop and Ambient than the Lounge, so when I went there I was really shocked to hear this House being played. Like earlier, it's not bad, but it was unexpected.

EH: Well the problem with House is that it's so ubiquitous now. It's everywhere, people sell cars with House music on TV. I think House and Disco is a really good genre of music. If it's good it has a very good beat, it can be very sensual if it's done properly. It is a place for just good, Deep House music. It's open late, we open at midnight and people don't even show until 1:30.

RF: Red is open midnight to 7?

EH: Yeah, but it gets more expensive as you show up later so it's better to show up early. It gets crazy after hours, at like 2:30 it's wall to wall with people dancing to really good house music. And the whole band thing is that we're not into just house music. We're into all kinds of stuff. I want to have really experimental bands playing there. If somebody wants to put on a play there during the week, rent it. It's a space that should be used by people trying to do stuff. ✤

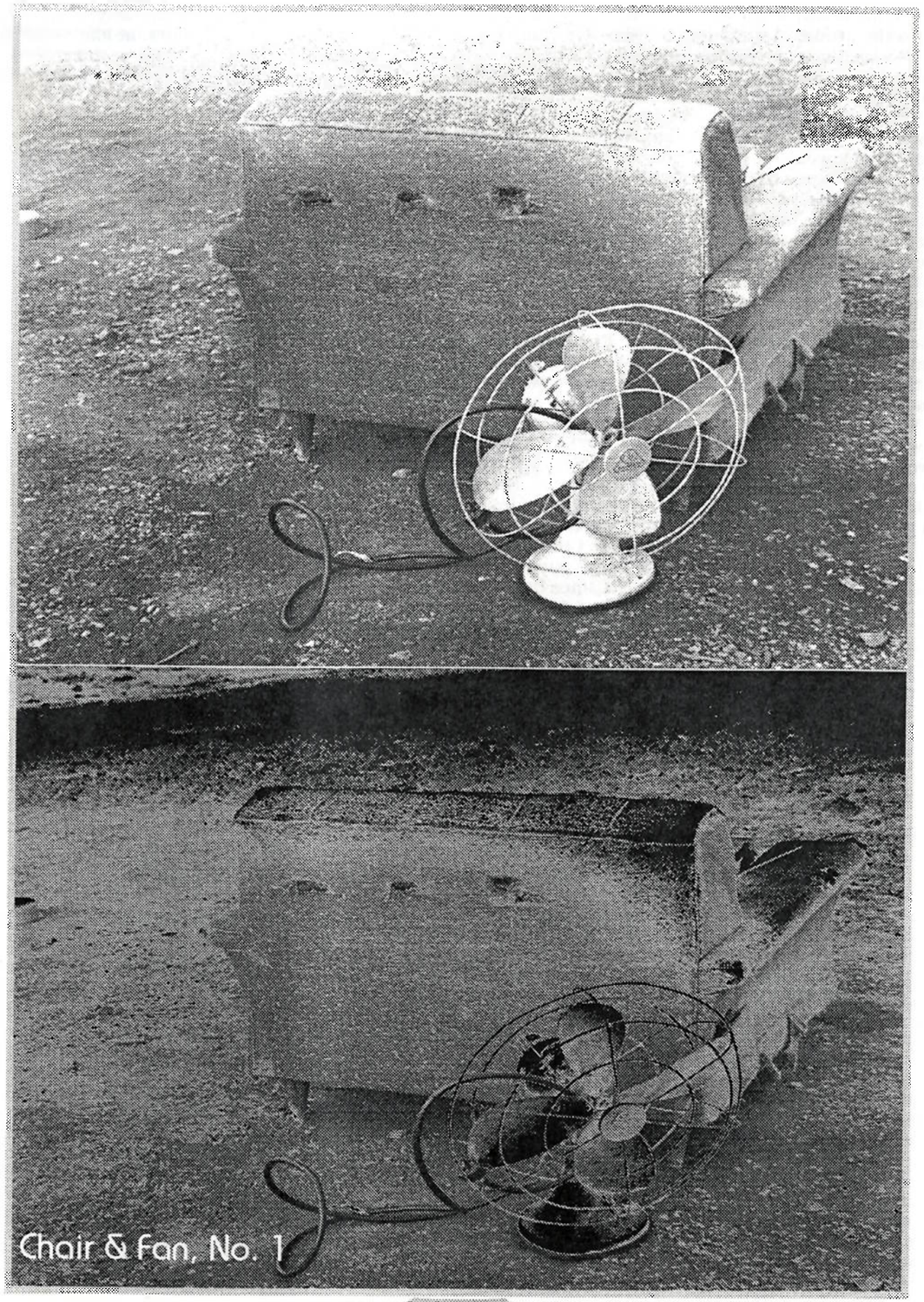
To find out more about Acid Jazz as a genre, Eric suggests visiting the following clubs and stores:

- 18th St Lounge- 1212 18th St NW WDC (202-466-3922)
- Cafe Lautrec- 2431 18th St NW WDC (202-265-6436) (Sun & Tues)
- Red- 1802 Jefferson Pl NW WDC
- Utopia- 1418 U St NW WDC (202-483-7669)
- Go! Compact Discs- 2440 Wilson Blvd Arlington VA (703-528-8340)
- Music Now- 3209 M St NW WDC (202-338-5638)

* Thievery Corporation currently has three 12" EPs, Exodus Quartet has many tracks on Acid Jazz compilations as well as a full-length CD on Instinct Records.

* Up Bustle and Out has numerous 12" singles on Ninja Tune and a full-length CD available domestically through Ninja Tune/Shadow.

* Trans Am has the 12" EP mentioned in the article as well as a full-length record on Thrill Jockey.



Chair & Fan, No. 1

Growing Up Blue Collar

By Jeff Barrus

All photos taken by Jeff Barrus and Tina Henry behind the Goodwill and Union Rescue Mission in Hagerstown, MD; Fall 1995.

Whenever Tina and I go to my mother's house near Hagerstown, MD, the trip through the mountains almost always poses a considerable strain on our car. The little Cavalier's engine moans as it struggles to pull itself up the steep slopes, other vehicles whisking past us at what seems like unnaturally fast speeds. Each time we make the trip, I can't help wondering if the it'll be the car's last. Its frame convulses with the strain, its dashboard shuddering in protest. However, once we're heading downhill, gaining momentum on the other side of the slope, the engine returns to normal, and the car then speeds smoothly down the hill, matching pace with the other vehicles on the road.

There are two large mountains separating Hagerstown from the rest of the Washington D.C. metro area, and after the first one is passed, any decent radio station is completely lost in static. Not even WHFS, the "modern rock" juggernaut of the east coast can penetrate. The only choices that remain on the radio are local stations, their repetoir consisting of Led Zepplin, Guns 'N Roses, and Travis Tritt. Such diversity.

Following another jarring trip over the second mountain, the Hagerstown "skyline" comes into view. Faint lights lay spread out in a twinkling web strewn across the valley floor below. Dark trees flank either side of the interstate, and the welcome smell of burnt wood and leaves drifts through the open windows, carried in by the wind rushing past the car. Whenever I get a whiff of that odor, memories flash through my head – I try not to concentrate too much on them, because they tend to make me more than a little sad, reminding me of old friends whom I'll likely never see again. Memories of the same smell in my now long-gone friend, Brian Ambrose's Datsun as we delivered newspapers after school to the tinny sounds of Minor Threat and the Dead Kennedys on his aging car stereo. Or of nights spent standing outside Aaron Whittington's house talking about comic book artists and movies on HBO. Or of my late father chiding me for carelessness as I mowed the grass during chilly late-Autumn afternoons.

The smell unsettles an enormous amount of near-forgotten emotional debris and triggers feelings of nostalgia and remorse that I'd rather not experience. Feelings of guilt over my father's death, or the regret of the slow dissolution of once important friendships. It's a smell that doesn't exist in D.C., and I'm glad of that. I'm glad that I'm not constantly reminded of change and the way things used to be, and that I'm not reminded of the person I keep pretending I'm not.

* * * *

I first left Hagerstown when I went away to the University of Maryland. I was seventeen, and my father was still alive. At the time, I thought I hated being from Hagerstown, the little city seeming like such a trap to me. I used to feel embarrassed when I told people where I come from and cringed when they made their inevitable "Deliverance" jokes. "Awful close to West Virginia," they always tell me when they discover my origins. "People up there must be real inbreds. Real rednecks. Are your parents cousins?" I'd laugh, blush perhaps, and tell them the truth – my parents aren't from Hagerstown, they just moved there so my dad could get a job. "Oh really?" they say. "What did he do? Was he a Doctor, or a computer programmer?" No, nope. Sorry. He was a printer. "Oh, like an artist?" No, like a factory worker. He printed government forms. Not books, but the kinds of forms you fill out in triplicate when you do your taxes or apply for a loan. "Heh," they say, and suddenly I change from a human being, to a "white trash" rube. A dumbass hick from the backwoods, who lucked into his education.

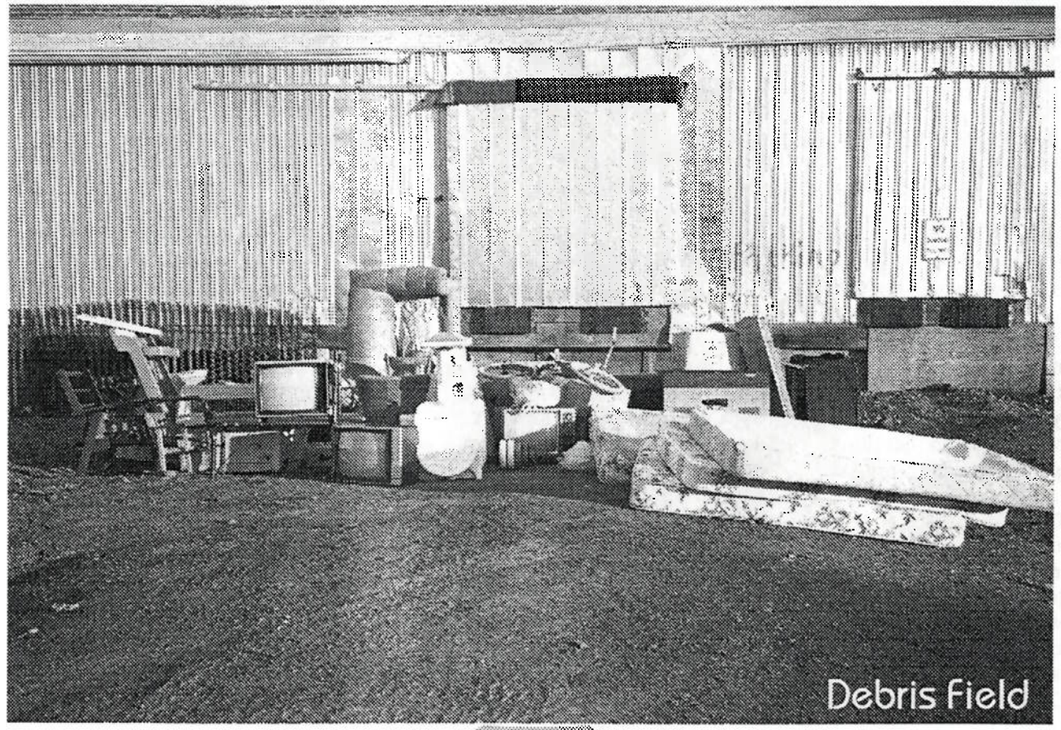
There's more to the town, its inhabitants and me than what people get on their first impression. But too often, their misconceptions about a

non-urban hometown tend to become reality even when they haven't the slightest clue about the flesh and blood truth behind their stereotypes. It's so easy just to dismiss a place based on the cliched notions of "country" injected into mainstream American culture through the media – so second nature to call blue collar people "white trash" and write them off as bottom-of-the-barrel citizens. It angers me – makes me absolutely sick. How can so many people be so narrow-minded? How can they not look at places like Hagerstown and see what I see – see the same beaten, tired people who are just trying to survive? Why do they feel the need to attack it and belittle the people there for being poor?

A couple of years back, an acquaintance of mine named Kevin told me that the reason working class people aren't financially prosperous is because they're lazy. That they don't want to apply themselves in school. I tried arguing with him, but it didn't do any good. We were speaking two completely different languages. He couldn't see why blue collar folks don't go to college – didn't understand that it's because both the money and the encouragement isn't there. He used himself as an example, saying that he applied himself academically, therefore he want to school. Forget the fact that his father was an oncologist at John Hopkins – that his education and room and board were more than paid for by his parents. He swore that had nothing to do with it. "Their parents would pay for their education if they wanted to go."

I couldn't believe it! The ignorance. How, on a dual income of less than $30,000 a year, could parents (provided they were together) who had a mortgage, car payments, bills, etc. be able to pay for their child to go to school at more than $10,000 a pop?! "There's financial aid . . ." he said. Financial aid? How adequate is that when you have to be extremely poor to even get enough to pay for all of your education? The only reason I was and still am at school is because my father died and my mother's income is below the poverty level. Before my dad's death, I got absolutely nothing from the government, even though my parents were still unable to pay. "What about rich relatives" Kevin suggested. I laughed at him. What rich relatives? When you're blue collar, your rich relative is the guy who's a foreman at the plant and who owns a boat. No doctors or lawyers here, gang.

At the end of our discussion, Kevin went away with no more of an open mind about the working class condition than when he started. So many people I know have shared his views. How do



you make them see that a town like Hagerstown isn't to be ridiculed, but understood? That blue collar people aren't lazy, that they're working their asses off to be even slightly less than miserable. That in their world, all that counts in that world is a good meal, a beer, and the hopes that your children might do a little better than you do. How do you make someone see that that their outlook isn't out of a lack of determination, merely out of necessity?

It's hard. I don't know how. But I keep trying, with the hopes of maybe one day breaking through to someone . . .

* * * *

My dad never expected me to go to college. That isn't to say that he didn't want me to go, just that he never expected it. I think that he hoped for it – that all dad's who come home with bad backs, sliced fingers, ruined sinuses, red faces and bruised skin hope that their children don't have to hurt themselves like they did to support their families. To survive. But I don't think he ever believed that I would – people from his family had never gone before, and I suspect he might have thought that they never would.

It's very hard for me to think about my father – to try to put things into some sort of rational perspective. My memories are so clogged and clouded – so impossible to access. When he was in the hospital dying, I had a hard time dealing with what was going on around me – I was totally incapable of coping, so I shut myself off. Quit feeling, denied the whole thing. Still am denying. So when I try to remember my dad, I can't. His face is pixelated and blurry, his voice faint and muffled. I can't hear or see him – I can't remember him.

But I can remember events – like being able to recount a story. I remember being in sixth grade and getting an "F" in Math on my report card and my father being so furious. "You're in the smart classes!" he said. "You've gotta do better – you've gotta apply yourself. You don't wanna end up in the plant like me, busting your ass and hurting yourself." He made me stay home from school so that he could try to teach the math to me himself – try to get me to learn. But he didn't understand it, looked at the book, looked at the problems, and told me to talk to my teacher. He couldn't do it. He tried to do it, but he just couldn't. At the time I was happy, because I didn't have to work on schoolwork – I could go watch cartoons, or play with my Transformers. But now, I look back and feel so sad. He was trying to help me – trying to insure that I didn't end up working in a desolate job like he did. And I just didn't understand. Totally didn't get it.

Tracks and Station

Most of the time, my dad and I didn't understand each other. He couldn't get why I wasn't interested in cars, hunting animals in the woods, or watching boxing matches on HBO, and I couldn't get why he thought my interests – punk rock and science fiction – were frivolous. We always yelled at each other, argued . . . communication was impossible. But whenever I wrote a short story, he'd take it into the plant and make his friends read it (even if they hated reading). He'd defend my interests to my grandfather, who thought I should spend my time doing more practical things. When I was miserable at the McDonalds job he made me get to teach me how to be a "good worker," he let me quit. When he didn't have the money to send me to the University of Maryland, he took out a loan. "We'll find some way for you to go," he said. "If you're smart enough to go to college, then you'll go."

And I went. But after two months at school, my father started getting sick. Stomach aches. Fatigue. Eventually he could barely walk. He went into the hospital, and after some three weeks of bumbling on the part of his physician, the Hagerstown medical staff said they couldn't figure out what was wrong with him, induced a coma and sent him by ambulance to the University of Maryland hospital in Baltimore. After numerous tests, they found that he had lymphoma. Cancer. My mother took leave from work and went down to see him every day. When I could get away from school, I joined her.

He died in April, and the funeral was on a sunny Spring day. Not the gray, cold, rainy day I would have expected. Though it was not immediate, a sort of literary exchange took place. My father was gone, but I was starting my life. The following year I began supporting myself by working long hours as an office manager while I took more than sixteen credits a semester. I moved permanently to D.C. and started *Restaurant Fuel* with Tina – and I also gained a sense of where I come from. I am working class, even though I may not be in a blue collar job. I have to work to survive – I can't just go to school and do whatever I want, expecting my mother to support me. I have to take responsibility for myself – not working means, not paying the rent or eating. It makes me very upset to think the work ethic my father was always trying to instill in my became clear only when he died.

I can't help but feel different than the people I meet at school. Even common interests do not necessarily mean common worldviews, or common experiences. I am in many ways now like my father, and now realize that I have very much in common with him and the other men like him in Hagerstown whom I used to greatly misunderstand. Though we may not look the same or talk the same, our lives are about the same thing – paying the rent and eating. But I also know that I have an added responsibility – to perform well in college and hopefully do something afterwards that will help people like them better their lives. Help blue collar kids get educated, and find some way to give them the same educational opportunities that middle class kids get. To try to change things in such a way that a parent does not have to die before that the government is willing to provide a child with substantial financial aid. To try to make things fair.

I only wish I knew how I could accomplish it.

* * * *

When I was growing up as a kid, I didn't have too many friends. Having brains wasn't exactly important – being smart, being good in school just isn't what the people in Hagerstown value. There are two high schools in town – one, North Hagerstown High where the "rich" kids go (they were actually just middle class), and South Hagerstown High, where the "poor" kids go (working class). School districts are based on where you live in the city – the blue collar neighborhoods are in the south end of town, the middle class neighborhoods in the north. Obviously enough, I went to South. However, most of my friends in high school went to North, though they themselves, largely came from blue collar/lower-middle class families. Although I had some punk rock friends at my school, I preferred to hang out with my friends from North because they were into science fiction movies, comics, role-playing games – stuff I cared a little more about. Also, I often found myself running out of things to talk about with my punk rock friends – although the music was smart and liberal, they tended to be a tad conservative.

By the time I graduated from high school, I was hanging out with my friends from North almost every night. Evenings in Hagerstown are pretty dead if you're under twenty-one, so we ended up spending a lot of time watching videos, playing role-playing games, talking, and blasting drug dealers and prostitutes on the street in "super-soaker" drive-bys from my friend Sean's van.

At the time, we had such high hopes for ourselves. We wanted to publish our own comic books, be in bands, be famous. But over the four years following our high school graduation, those dreams began to wink out one by one. I went away to college and found my worldview drastically reoriented, started hating myself and where I was from for whatever reason kids do when they feel inadequate, my friends all did their own thing. My friends Aaron and Matt went away to art school in Pittsburgh, my friend Jake stayed and worked and my friend Sean went to community college. Gradually, we lost touch. I met, started dating, and moved in with Tina, another blue collar kid with the same interests as me. I kept up relations with my friend Jake, as we tried to put together a comic book. Everyone else I lost track of – I scarcely saw anyone following my sophomore year of college. Just Jake. I tried to put my friends out of my head, tried to forget that there were people somewhere with whom I shared a common background. It was the only way I could deal with the change – I missed them, but because I now lived in D.C., seeing everyone when I came became an impossible task, with most of my friends working odd hours or away at school.

And then everyone, for various reasons, began to move back. Except for me. They saw each other regularly, did things . . . and here I was, an hour and half away from everybody, feeling completely left out. I felt a strange sense of loneliness – even though I have Tina, and have made some friends and acquaintances here, part of me missed the old days when I hung out with my friends back home every night.

I started making an effort to go see them, and have since gone back a few times to visit. Sean and Jake have both contributed to *Restaurant Fuel* as a result, and everyone helped us bind over 100 copies when we had a tight deadline with one of our distributors. However, things are now changing in such a way, that my connection with them and Hagerstown may soon be gone. Adulthood in its most proper forms is beginning to peak in, and nothing will likely change things back to the way they used to be. And I, despite my resistance to it, am beginning to realize that my attitudes may indeed be a bit more middle class than I'd previously thought. ✤

In Part II (to be published in either Restaurant Fuel *#3 or #4) I will run interviews with my friends regarding their feelings on growing up blue collar in a small town, and also the thoughts on how marriage and childbirth have effected their lives.*

growing up is hard to do...

or how i wish i still knew my little sister

by tina henry

When my sister, Lisa, and I were young (I was 8, she was 5), I saved us from being kidnapped. At the time, we lived in Silver Spring, MD, and my mom was an Avon lady. Lisa & I liked to deliver her Avon catalogs to the neighbor's houses. We'd help mom stuff the books into the little Avon-scented baggies and carry them tightly in our little hands.

Our route was fairly simple ... up Bristol Ave (our street), around the block and back. On this particular day, I remember we were wearing our matching terry-cloth jackets that my mom had bought from some other young woman who sold terry-cloth clothing instead of Avon. Mine was teal and Lisa's was blue grey.

We had gotten around the block to the next street when I noticed an old, beat up purple car inching behind us. I became very nervous, but didn't say anything to Lisa so that she wouldn't freak out and start screaming or crying.

I'd seen *Adam*, I knew what was going on.

So I knew that we had to get out of there fast. The man in the car drove past us and up ahead of us. Oh, my god, he's cutting us off, I thought. We couldn't get home by our usual path because he was sitting there in his car, eyeing us... and turning around and going the other way would take too long. He'd surely get us that way, too. I remember being angry at him and realizing that I had to think fast.

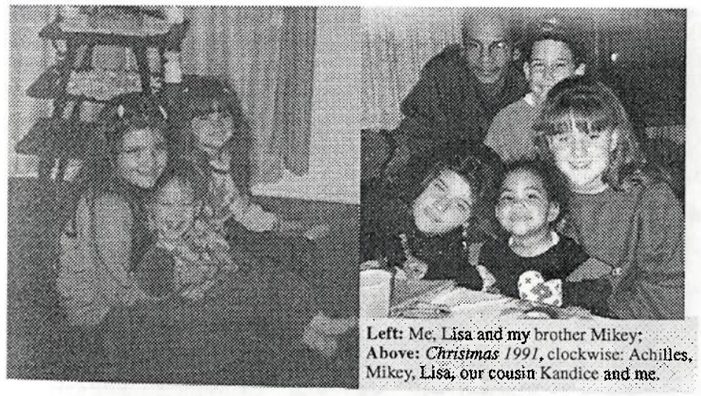
So in a quick move, I decided that we had to run though the yards, from the back of the houses on this street to the back yards of the houses on our street. I knew it would have to be timed right 'cause we would not be able to out-run him. I first pulled Lisa behind a cluster of trees and she began to panic as I whispered that we would have to run home. By this time, the man had jumped from his car and was looking for us, coming after us. I got my first look at him. He was tall and thin with long hair. At this point, I knew we had to run for it. I grabbed Lisa by the arm, and we started running through the first backyard. Never looking back, we reached the fence to the next back yard. A fence! Something I hadn't thought of. As a chubby kid, a fence was my worst nightmare. Quickly, though, I hoisted Lisa over the fence and jumped over myself. We got home a few minutes later, totally out of breath.

A week later, a little girl got kidnapped from Flower Ave., a few blocks away.

****

I have been wondering lately, how other people deal with watching their younger siblings grow up. To me, whenever I think of my sister, I think of her as like four different people (none of which are who she is today). I think of her as that tiny little curly haired girl who I had to throw over the fence or as the 8 year old tomboy who loved to climb on the swingset out back. I remember when my friend Achilles lived with us and he and Lisa used to dance to Michael Jackson videos in the living room.

My favorite version of Lisa is from about a year and a half ago, when I actually thought we might become friends. I used to drive her to Saturday school and then afterwards, we would go to the Goodwill in



Left: Me, Lisa and my brother Mikey; **Above:** *Christmas 1991*, clockwise: Achilles, Mikey, Lisa, our cousin Kandice and me.

Annapolis and I'd buy junk and she'd compare me to all the old ladies in the store. It was like having a friend that you actually like, not just someone to hang out with. One day, she pointed to an old German woman who was wearing a big furry hat and had her arms full of junk, Lisa laughed and told me I would look like her when I got old. We would laugh and make fun of everyone on the street. I really enjoyed my trips with Lisa. She reminded me of me when I was in high school. On one day, we were running late, but I saw this lime green table on the side of the road at the Annapolis Junque Boutique, where they put all this furniture out on their lawn to get you into the store. We stopped to find that not only was the table lime green, but the table top was actaully a lime made out of little pieces of silicon. We laughed and laughed and bought the table for $15. It is still my favorite thing in my apartment.

This all ended when Lisa got her driver's license. She didn't need me to drive her around anymore.

Recently, my sister (now 19) "ran away" from home with her 16 year old boyfriend. One day, she just disappeared and left a note saying that it was time for her to go. I was shocked, hurt and angry not only because I was worried about her, but because I thought it was just a dumb move. Without any skills or anything, how did she think she was going to survive? We had constant contact with her, because like most teenagers today, she has a beeper.

When I talked to her during that time, I tried to talk some sense into her. Tell her that there was no way that she could survive, no way she'd be able to afford a place to live. Tell her that we all loved her and that there was no reason to do things this way. She'd just sorta laugh at me and say "whatever, Tina." Like I was an annoyance, an idiot older sister who knew nothing about the world.

To make a long story short, all of her stuff got stolen and she had to come home afterall. She was basically homeless and broke. Today, she's still withdrawn from the family and is constantly fighting with my mom. If anyone in the world can relate to her, I think it is me. I know what it is like to be 19 and not know what to do and where to go or how to begin a life. I worked through it. It takes smarts and planning.

If I could get her to listen to me for a second or two, I'd tell her to forget about boyfriends altogether. Boyfriends will lead you nowhere fast. And I'd tell her to at least try and go to college for a semester or two on loans. At least to give herself some sort of structure and give her some time to think about her future before jumping into it. I'd also tell her to ditch the silly shirts that say "Sexy Girl" or whatever the hell she's wearing these days.

But I can't get her to listen because I don't know anything.

I knew, though, to throw her over the fence that day. I guess that was enough. ✤

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Grandma Henry's high school class picture. She's front and center.

We're all business girls...

Last issue we printed chapter one of the 1895 book, *The Business Girl* by Ruth Ashmore. The first installment advised the business girl on topics from how to dress to what honesty in business means. Chapter two explores the girl's relations with her employer. Ruth wants all of you girls to remember, **do not** get intimate with your employer! Do you know what could happened if you do? You might just fall in love with each other and then, you busy girl, you would have to quit your job! Enjoy Ruth's preachiness and don't work too hard. Next issue's installment will explore living in a boarding-house. How could you afford to wait? — ***Tina***

The Girls' Relations With Her Employer

The girl who, day in and day out, sits in a comfortable office where there are other girls, has her work planned out for her, and is only asked that she do it with great exactness, is, least of all, the girl who requires advice. This girl, though she may sometimes tire of the monotony of her labor, is protected by the girls around her, and to her there do not come - at least not often - such temptations as waylay another kind of worker.

You know the girl I mean. The girl with a big brain, a heart to match, young in years, of a gay, happy nature, eager to do the most, and who finds her work almost exclusively among men. She is the girl who has cried out to me for a word of advice; she is the girl, who, making one little mistake, follows it up with greater ones, until she becomes a hard-faced, pessimistic woman, who finds nothing good on earth, and has but little hope of heaven. She is the girl who began wrong and I want her not only to think over what I say to her, but to stop and consider whether she is acting in a way that will result in the best for her future.

The Girl Whose Work is of a Special Kind

Katharine is young and handsome. The need has arisen for her to earn her living; it is possible that she has studied stenography, that she understands bookkeeping, but whether she does or not, a kind friend has obtained a position for her in the office of a well-known business man. Before going to business that first day she wept tears of joy as she bade her mother goodby, because she was so happy to be of use in the world and so glad to have such a good opportunity. That day Katharine makes her first mistake. She goes to business in a bright and attractive gown, with her hair elaborately arranged, wearing all the dainty little bits of jewelry that she would assume if she were going out for a shopping trip at eleven o'clock. She certainly mtkes a pretty picture, but not one suited to the early hours of the morning. Katharine may learn to remedy this mistake; she may realize in time that a dark, simple, well-made and well-fitting frock is what a girl should wear at business, and that jewelry is as much out of place in an office as it is in church. The folly of overdressing, Katharine may learn to overcome, and if she does she will take a long step in the right direction.

The Mistakes Which She Makes

Her employer meets her pleasantly, her work is explained to her, and, being, quickminded, she realizes that she will be able, without much trouble, to satisfy the people who have employed her. She goes home at night full of enthusiasm about her work, and tells to the listening mother of the happy busy days that she expects to have. Her working days may be happy. That rests with Katharine. If she is wise she discovers in a short time the desirability of quiet dressing of a simple coiffure, and of the omission of all jewelry, except the pin, at her throat and the watch at her belt. If she is not wise she will make her toilet more and more elaborate, and be pleased to hear that she is known in the office building, that building where there are hundreds of men, as "the stylish-looking girl in Blank's office." One of the clerks tells her of this, and foolish Katharine laughs, looks pleased, and concludes that she is able to buy a much-longed-for

article of dress, since, of course, she must keep up her reputation.

Then, when she has five minutes to herself, or in the time before she begins her work, she forgets that she is born of a race of gentlewomen, and she laughs and jests with one of the clerks, or assists in playing a joke on the office boy. After this, has she any right to be offended if the clerk with whom she has been so "chummy" (that 's what he calls it) addresses her by her first name?

Her Behavior With Her Employer

Katharine's work is such that she spends much time alone with her employer. He is a kindly man, eager to make her comfortable. There are days when she is with him for hours, taking down his private correspondence or arranging some work that he must supervise. Being naturally sympathetic, Katharine forgets that she should not speak to her employer as she would to a man whom she knows socially. And so, one morning when he seems a bit downcast, she ventures to ask if he is worried. He answers her pleasantly, tells her there is no worry that she can remedy and there is nothing wrong with her work. She grows to watch his face each day to see if he is in an agreeable or unhappy mood. One word of sympathy, spoken by her, is like the electric button that starts many a train down the roadway to destruction. Soon finding that she is eager to have him feel pleased; that she is interested, simply just now, because she is a human being, in his welfare, he answers in a semi-affectionate, semi-paternal tone, "How can any man be happy when his life is like mine?" And tender-hearted Katharine whispers in a very

feeling tone, "Oh, I'm so sorry that you're miserable! " That is the beginning.

Errors Which She Drifts Into So Easily

As the days go on, instead of dictating his letters to her, or telling her of the work on the books of which she has the care, he tells her of his unhappy life - of an unsympathetic wife, of a woman who, giving him no love, he has grown to dislike. And Katharine, in her ignorance, listens and sympathizes with him. And then there comes a day when, because half the morning, has been wasted in talking- about these private affairs, Katharine is detained beyond her luncheon hour, and when the work is finished her employer, looking at his watch, says, "Why, Miss Gray, it's way past your luncheon hour; you'd better come out and take a lunch with me." And Katharine, thinking of her luncheon brought from home, now dry and tasteless, concludes that there will be no harm in accepting the invitation. She argues with herself that this man is in the same set socially that she is — indeed, she goes among people with whom his wife would be proud to associate; so why should she decline to go out to luncheon with him?

At night she tells her mother, and the mother, picturing the employer as a kind, elderly gentleman, regards it as another evidence of her girl's ability to

work well and make friends, for her employer to be so considerate of her, and regards his interest as being no more than she deserves.

In a little while the going out to luncheon with her employer becomes nothing uncommon. Soon, after a remark made by Katharine about her liking of flowers, there comes to her many a pretty posy and many a big box of blossoms, always to the office, at which the clerks smile, and, looking at them, the office boy does not hesitate to giggle. And Katharine flushes and tosses her head, and says to herself, "There's no harm in it!" But there is harm in it, my Katharine, there is much harm in it.

A Girl Must Maintain Her Self-respect

No man has a right to tell any woman of any lack, real or fancied, which exists in his married life. And you have no right, you busy working-girl, to attempt to arrange a social position between yourself and your employer. The day comes when both Katharine and her employer realize that they care too much for each other. Then, if Katharine is a brave girl and good girl, she closes her desk, takes home her little belongings, says good-by quietly to her employer, and goes home and tells her story to her mother. And both of them, being good women, will thank God that Katharine has discovered her mistake in time, for now, though she will have to start out afresh, yet she will be a stronger girl

and a better girl, because, although she has made mistakes, she has realized what they were and what they were leading her into.

The Right Way To Behave

I want you to understand exactly what I mean. I want you to realize that though you may meet your employer socially, still during the hours that you are in the office you are employed by him, and you have no right to claim, and he has no right to ask, any social recognition. You can always be polite; you need not be hard-hearted, and there can be, without harm, an exchange of pleasant words. But during business hours there is wisdom in attending to your business and doing nothing else. Your self-respect should not allow you to be free in your manner with the different clerks who are your companions, and you should be wise enough not to have a confidant in the office.

Hard? It is not hard. It is easy to do your work to the best of your ability, and then when the working hours are over, to find pleasure in your friends, those friends who will be all the dearer because they have not about them any hint of your workaday world. Your employer can be your friend if necessity arise, but only then.

There are hundreds of working-girls — I know this and I thank God for it— who are industrious, intelligent and honest, who make good names for all working-women, but once in a while there comes along a poor weak one who stumbles and falls. And, oddly enough, her unhappy example does not seem a warning to many another pretty charming, girl who follows in her footsteps.

Do Your Work and Accept No Favors

No matter who your employer is, you cannot afford to accept luncheons, drives, flowers, or any special social recognition from him. I do not mean that all men are bad. Again, I thank God there are thousands of good men, but masculine human nature is weak, and when things have gone wrong at home there is an immense satisfaction to the average man in getting a sweet sympathy, which he probably does not deserve, from a pretty, charming girl who believes in him. One girl asked me what she should say when her employer "comes down a little late, is cross, speaks shortly, slams things around, ferrets out mistakes, and exposes them to the whole force, displays very little patience, and keeps the surrounding atmosphere so warm that pretty soon each occupant of the office is affected by his mood." Say nothing. Do your own work quietly and composedly. If you are spoken to, answer simply, tell the truth; but it is not the business of the working-girl to persuade her employer into a good temper.

If he is ill-bred enough to vent his own ugliness on innocent people, be sure that he will be more likely to respect you if you work steadily and say nothing than if you try to conciliate him and persuade him into amiability. You are hired to work, not to cater to the emotions of your employer, and when you are doing your work faithfully you are doing all that you are paid for. ✤

AN APOLOGY

BY JACOB WARRENFELTZ

I have this recurring dream. Not really a nightmare, cause I don't feel scared. Just ashamed. In my dreams I hold my junior high best friend, Justin Lund, down to the pavement. I am sitting on his chest, with his legs pinned under my legs. I am pounding him in the face with my fists, leaving huge gashes and bruises. "I'm sorry Justin. I'm sorry." His eyes look more hurt than anything else. The kind of hurt eyes that someone gives you when they are really disappointed in you.

"It's OK Jake, I forgive you." Everytime I wake up from this dream I feel like shit. You see I have done some terrible things, and I am here to offer my apology...

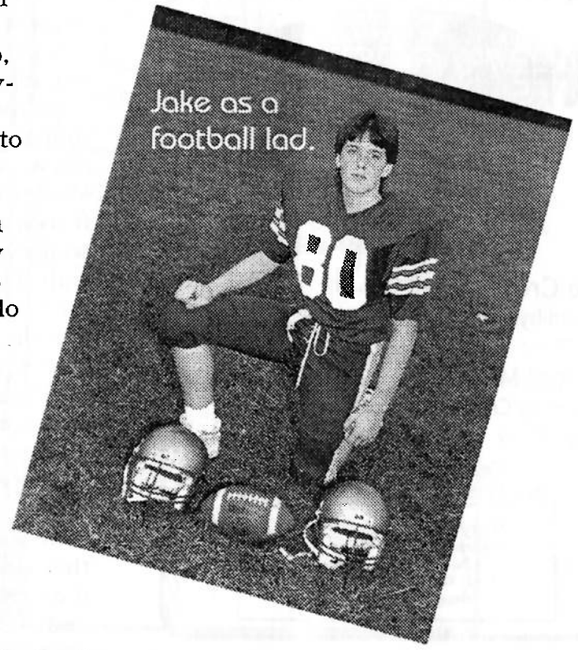
When I was young, growing up in military bases across the globe, I was kind of an outcast. Not really due to my father's occupation. There were a lot of kids on the bases. When we lived overseas we went to D.O.D. (Department of Defense) schools and had no contact with nonmilitary kids. No, I was dumb, fat, and about a head taller than everyone else. I was so clumsy that some parents of my friends wouldn't let me into their homes.

Girls?? Forget it. About the only thing I had was friends. You see, when you're a military brat, you seldom stay in one place for very long. At least this is how it was for me. The friends you do make are very important, even if only for a short time.

I have always been fortunate to have the kind of friends that I did. That I do. Surprisingly enough, when I was a kid my friends where nothing like me. I mean they were outcasts, too. Not accepted into the socially elite groups of grade school. But they were graceful, intelligent, athletic people. Most of them were skateboarders. One of them in particular, Justin Lund, became my best friend. Justin was a small, weak person. He had a great sense of humor though, and always seemed to find the comedy in any situation. I think the fact that we were so different made us inseparable. Justin always seemed to get into trouble with the jocks, who at the time weren't really jocks (well not yet anyway), and I would have to bail him out.

Being larger than most people my age, this was not a problem. Well, time went on and we grew up. In a year I grew more than a foot, thinning my composure considerably. I became a handsome, tall, agile, and popular young man. My relationship with Justin quickly dissipated as I became one of the "in" crowd. It amazes me that all anyone wants to do when they're a kid is to fit in and have friends. It's really funny how similar everyone is. When I was friends with Justin, most of our days together were spent playing Atari or riding our bikes.

When I became popular and had "all the right friends," we did exactly the same things. I really felt gypped at first. So here I was, up there. Higher on the food



chain. Of course, I completely forgot Justin. I avoided him at first, then ridiculed him with the rest of my new friends. Quietly, Justin took it all. But I could always see it in his eyes. But things got worse...

At high school, I felt like some kind of damned elitist. At that time we lived in North Carolina. I was one of the jocks by now, a football player. My first real girlfriend came along, a real evil girl.

The head cheerleader. She could see my blank stupidity, and use it to her advantage. There was this one kid, Wayne Jones, who was probably not that bad of a guy. He was physically weaker, slower than me, but from what I hear, he had a great personality. Somehow or another he crossed paths with my girlfriend. The next thing I know, Wayne had touched her ass, or something like that. Anyway, that's what she told me, and being the stupid lug that I was, I ate it right up. Now that I was popular and hip and all that shit, I finally had the one thing I need to clench it all; a target. I cornered him repeatedly, taunting him into a fight. For about a year, whenever he was at school, he was unsafe.

It was shortly after that, mid-season in my sophomore year, that my life took an amazing swing. During the last game of the season I had my kneecap crushed by a helmet. For about three or four months I was out of commission. After the reconstructive surgery, where my prosthetic kneecap was "installed", my career in high school greatly changed.

Immediately I noticed that my jock friends wanted little to do with me. You see, now that I was damaged goods, I was useless to them. I felt ashamed, embarrassed, and reckless. I grew my hair long, started wearing all black, smoked, and generally hated life. I was bitter to everyone, including my new "stoner" friends.

Surprisingly my friendships grew, and I began to grow out of my slump. So, dark, menacing, chain-smoking, and beer-drinking, my teenage life grew on.

It took me a long time to grow out of that one. To learn to accept other styles of music, not to mention welcoming other shades of the spectrum into my wardrobe. It took me quite a long ride to get here, with someone I can look in the mirror and smile with. I know that experiences are what make you yourself, so you should have no regrets about past choices if you are happy with what you are today.

Unfortunately, I wish I had not stepped on so many toes along the way...

So Justin, Wayne, David, and anyone else who has ever been made to feel weak, stupid, or inadequate during their adolescent and high-school years, please accept this small apology from a reformed bully. If it helps at all, when I have those dreams and everytime I think of myself, I still see that dumpy, clumsy geek. ✤

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WHY I SOMETIMES SEEM LIKE A JERK
BY JEFF
When I was a kid, I had very little contact with other children—I always played by myself.
You will die, Skywalker!
Solitude in my early years led to a later social ineptitude that I cannot shake...
Uhm... uh... I'll ha--ave uh... a coke wi--with that. Uhm, please...
Simple interactions cause me much distress.
My attempt to ask a girl in my history class to the prom was a catastrophe!
Uhm, would you go to the prom with me?
Popular Chick
Loser
With you?! Ha ha ha ha! No! Haha...
When I got to college, I grew my hair long to hide my face and tried to look mean and not afraid
Pink hair
Long-haired Goofy Punk Rock Poser
Grr... Fuck off...
I later cut my hair and did things like my radio show and Restaurant Fuel to deal better with people.
WMUC College Park
That was uh... June of '4[illegible] with uh... with... "Mooch"...
Now, I'm much better with communicating, but sometimes I do slip...
Ring! Ring!
Could someone else get the phone? I... I can't talk... Please?! Somebody?!

Squid on a stick

Katherine Holvoet proves she's an ace reporter as she uncovers the mysteries of the Circle K — straight from Japan

I never liked The Smiths very much, while one of my friends was wild for them. But there was a line in one of their songs that I absolutely adore, "I want to live where it's always Saturday, I want to live in a shopping mall."

Not only is it always Saturday in a mall, you can never tell what time it is. I think that has something to do with spending strategies, like in casinos in Las Vegas. Anyway, convenience stores take that idea one step further; not only is it always Saturday, you can't tell where the hell you are in a convenience store. Well, you know what part of the store you're in, but you don't know what part of the world you are in.

Here's a hint: can you see octopus or squid jerky near the cash register? Is there a shelf dedicated to underwear (solids, lace, and boxers) all the same size (S)? Can you see things like shrimp flavored corn puffs and twenty different cans of cold tea? In the refrigerated food section, is rice prominently featured? If the answer is yes, you probably aren't in the US.

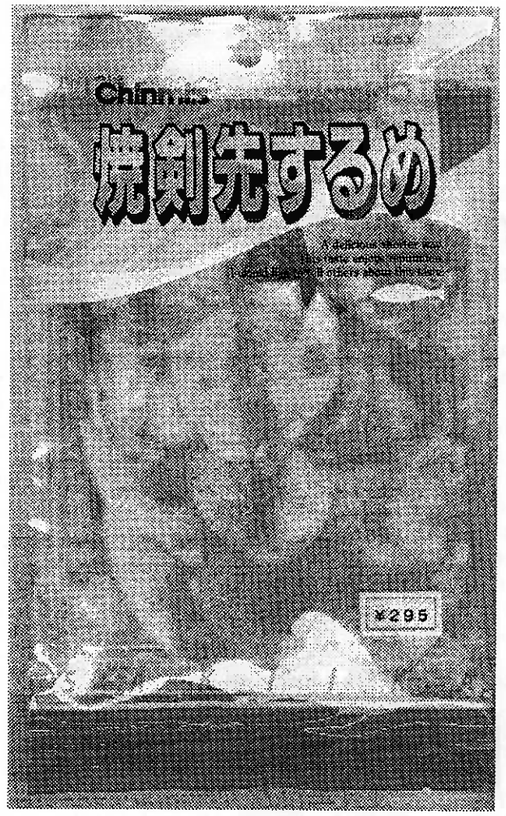
You could be in Korea, so look at the candy aisle. Does every package say the brand name LOTTE? No? Then you must be in Japan, you lucky thing.

One of the things that tripped me out the most when I came to Japan was seeing the 7-11 and Circle K sign every 20 feet. Even crazier, most Japanese people think that 7-11 and Circle K are Japanese, and are completely floored when you tell them that they came from the US.

Kate is currently an Engish teacher in Japan. She sent us this all of the beautiful wrappers, food and photos for this story.

They also think Mister Donuts is Japanese (I haven't seen one back home recently, so maybe the company moved . . .). Most people seem to know that McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken are American, however. They even call stores like Circle K conbeeniensu storu (CS), mangled Japanglish. Not that there is much convenient about them here.

What is the number one reason many people walk into a CS? To use the cash machine (or maybe that was just me. I never seemed to keep more than 5 dollars on me at a time, a combination of poverty due to money mismanagement and a poorly though out fiscal plan – If I don't have money on me I can't spend it. Did I mention I wasted a lot of time, and incidentally money in CSes?.) There are no cash machines open in this country after 6 P.M., on holidays, or on Sundays. In short, they are open only during the times the bank is open. Therefore, they would be inoperable 90% of the time that most customers would be inside a CS.



Now, you may say to yourself, that's a little inconvenient, but I still have three credit cards and a checkbook, so I could probably do without an ATM. Think again! This is a cash only society. Trust is inherent in the whole checking system. Each store has to trust that you have the money in the bank to cover your purchases (or, if your state has a check guarantee card, that puts the onus of trust on the bank. They trust that if you bounce a check, they can squeeze the money, plus a 25$ overdraft fee out of you.) Japanese people aren't very comfortable with ambiguity, like: I say I have the money, but the banks says I don't. Your confident smile slips, and you clutch your credit cards, and bravely go forth to be a consumer. EEEEENNNNNN! Thank you for playing! Try again. The only stores that take credit cards are Denny's. It doesn't serve American food (I don't care what the damn menu says, we don't put jello beads in our milk shakes, and we don't served fried octopus), but it does take credit cards. And the other stores that take credit cares are sushi bars.

A Westerner who eats enough food at a sushi bar to feel satisfied, will probably pay about $100 (no joke), so credit cards are welcome. In fact, with the exception of Denny's, the credit card sign is not a welcome sight. So, you, the hapless consumer must remember to go the bank before Saturday, the day before any public holidays and before 6 P.M. Most people have cultivated the habit of keeping at least a ¥10,000 note on them at all times. That's roughly equal to keeping a $100 bill in your pocket. The paper money starts with ¥1,000, then jumps to ¥5,000, then ¥10,000.

You have finally gotten that all straight, and you strut down the street thinking "I'm bad, I'm bad". You see the Circle K sign, and you think "I'm bad, but I'm also a bit peckish." Thoughts of a burrito and maybe a slushy dance in your head as you walk through the automatic door, only to be dashed on the not inconsiderable boulders of reality.

The first aisle doesn't alarm you too much. Your eyes widen a bit when you see that mousse is ¥880 and gel is ¥800 (at a current exchange rate of $1.07 to ¥100). You giggle when you see the LARK (cigarettes) brand toothpaste, whose motto is "Reduces your nicotine and odor." Opposite the personal hygiene products, conveniently, is the pornographic Manga (Japanese

illustration/animation) section, accessible to all males, regardless of age.

And usually there is a flock of them flipping through the pages; no one buys magazines if they can help it. Due to Japan's rainy season, they also have killer mosquitos. The death to mosquito product section is well developed, moving from smoke coils, to spray, to liquid vaporizers.

Moving right along you will see the only bargain to be had in this country (unless you really like fermented soy beans whipped with raw egg, a lovely little dish called Natto that EVERY Japanese person will ask you if you have tried yet) a 12 pack of toilet paper for ¥380. Tissue paper is often given away on city street corners as advertisements for "Talk lines" where it's pretty obvious from the picture of a woman in a playboy bunny suit with cash sticking out of her bust being helped into her coat buy a man with a dazed and expectant look on his face, the talk line is either about sex, or how to meet to pay for and receive sex. Since it's a product given away, it has little commercial value; and strangely enough for a country that consumes a lot of rice, toilet

paper is dirt cheap, even in Circle K.

Not surprisingly, all of the battery and photo film brands are Japanese only: national, Sony, and Fuji. If you shift your view a little to the right, you will see, frozen, a delicacy much enjoyed in Japan, pan fried chicken skin, minus the meat. They actually eat the bits I deliberately peel off. They also like to eat fried chicken cartilage, because it's crunchy, and haromone (pig intestine). Needless to say, it is vitally necessary to quickly master the art of how to say NO THANK YOU!!!!

You may be delighted to find that they have Pringles here, imported from Hong Kong. Now that I am 8 kilos heavier than I was before I came here, I'm not so happy about the Pringles. Japanese chips are safe from me, though. With oh so appetizing flavors of corn puffs like strawberry, melon, shrimp and wasabi (strong enough to make your nose run) I don't think I'll become much bigger.

The seaweed flavored potato chips are also not a turn on for my picky palette. The beer munchies are good for a laugh though. Peanuts and dried sardines.

The sardines are very small, and quite tasty, since they are salty, although it can take a while to get over their little white eyes.

I personally don't like Japanese chocolate, as it is saltier and therefore a bit more bitter than US chocolate, but many foreigners love it for that reason. Even so, I still think chocolate shaped like mushrooms would be a marketing disaster, but not so here. A popular chocolate bar is named Crunky. I think they meant to write crunchy, as it has puffed rice in it. The gum aisle is also an eye opener, literally. Caffeine is not a bad word here like it is at home, many packs of gum proudly display the "With Caffeine Crystals!" sign.

There are also some unusual flavors, like Kissmint's Lemon Litchi gum *very very good* or the LOTTE Coffee bean gum, shaped like coffee beans. My all time favorite gums are the Mathematical brand, with words in 3 foreign languages, French, English and Chinese on one side and the definition in Japanese on the back, and the gum that has a big picture of a toothbrush and the words NoTime printed. There is a very good reason why I visit the dentist only when I come home for Christmas.

Moving on to the grab and go food section, you will see the "bento" boxes. A bento is a Japanese lunch. Each food is in a separate little (stress the word little) section of the box. Usually half of the box is rice, with things like pickles, which are made out of every vegetable known to humankind here, fried pork cutlets, omelets, fried chicken, etc.. filling the rest. While the Japanese don't like spicy foods, enough like kimchee to have it stocked in Circle K. An absolute favorite quick food is onigiri: rice, filled with almost anything from natto (UGH!) to salmon, then shaped into a triangle and wrapped in nori, a kind of particleboard style seaweed (it tastes a bit like particle board too).

The instant soup section is possibly the largest in the world. There are 12 kinds of instant miso soup, 4 kinds of corn chowder, and 54 separate and discrete kinds of instant ramen. Japanese men never learn to cook. For the four years they are at college, they eat instant ramen every day.

Kate's usual purchase at the Circle K— Tonkatsu (pork tenderloin), bento (lunch box) with soda

So do we, but we only have a choice of four kinds.

Almost as rife with variety is the instant coffee section, with 11 kinds of coffee. The nondairy creamer here is a scream, it is actually called CREAP!

There are 12 kinds of coffee in the refrigerator, along with 13 kinds of tea. However, there is only one kind of cola, Coke. I've seen Pepsi only in one grocery store. Some of the drink names are truly unpotable. Take Calpis for instance. If you don't know what I mean, say it out loud. Who would ever drink something like that? Or Pocari Sweat (it tastes like one of the bodily secretions, which shall remain nameless). However, the soda section is completely redeemed by C.C. Lemon. This stuff is dynamite, it kicks Sprite in the butt, no doubt about it. I am a convert, and an addict.

As you make a final, awe struck sweep of Circle K, your eyes spy two anomalies. For just ¥800 you too can own a plastic insect cage (haven't they heard of jars?) and then there is the fireworks section. For a country that is so densely packed, you would think they'd want to deter children from playing with explosives. Since it is only June, the section isn't very big. By August 10th, a major holiday here in Japan (I don't know which one) the section will dominate the store. It is always conveniently located next to the lighters.

To finish off your Circle K experience, after you have made your choices and paid with blood, you exit and cross the street. In my neighborhood, directly across the street from Circle K is a stand of vending machines. I lived here for six weeks before I actually noticed and looked at the machines, since Japan can be seen from satellite not because of street lights but because of the light from all of their vending machines. At this particular corner, you have your choice of cigarettes, beer (the machines shuts off at 11 P.M., and Circle K closes at 12 P.M.) pornographic videos featuring women (possibly girls) dressed in school girl uniforms and what I think are pornographic trading cards, or something in a box the size of a deck of cards with pictures of naked women on it that costs about $30. While I am very curious, I am also cheap, so I and you will remain unfulfilled upon that point. ✤

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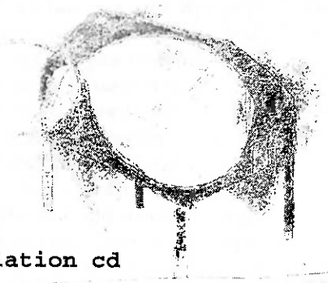

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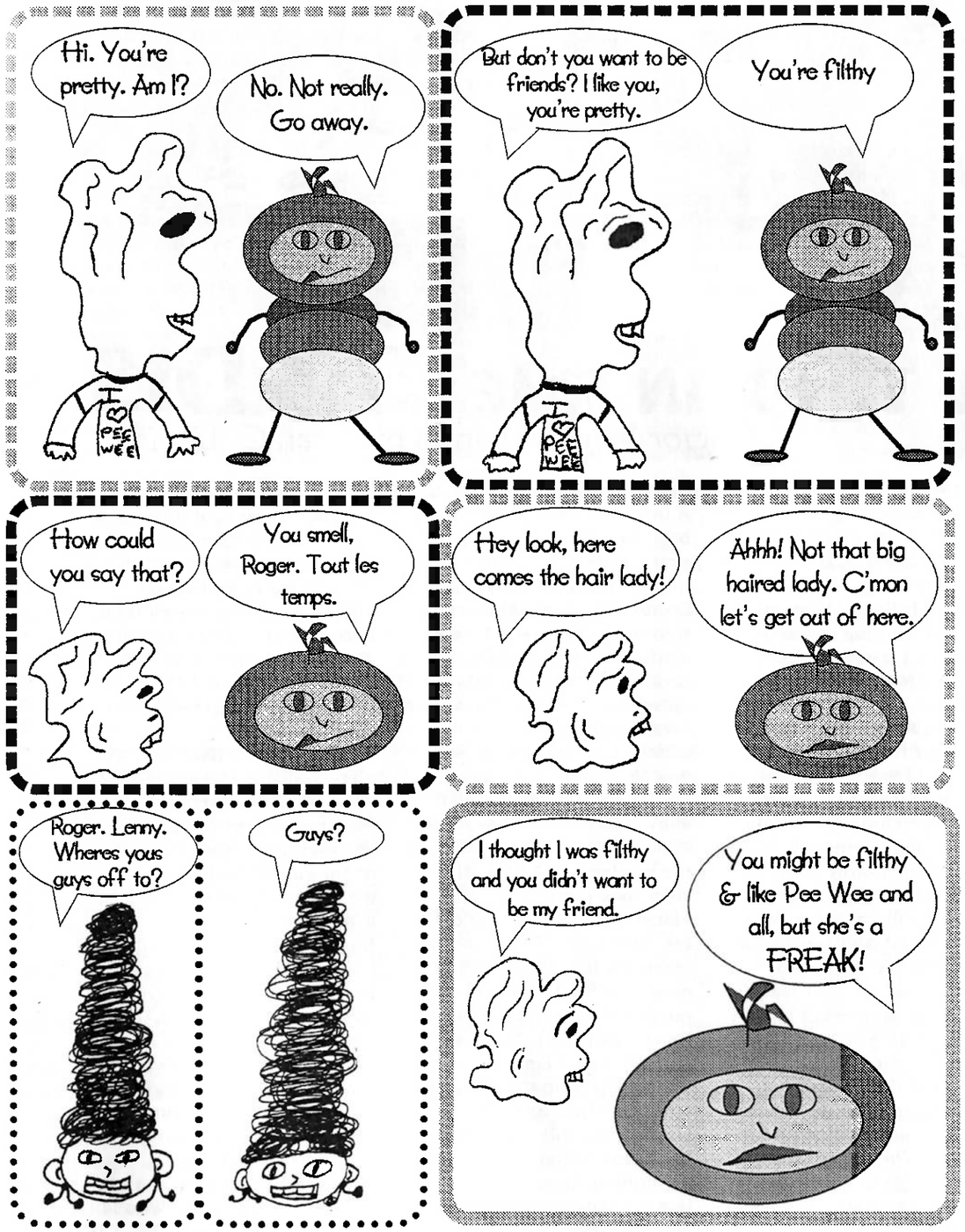
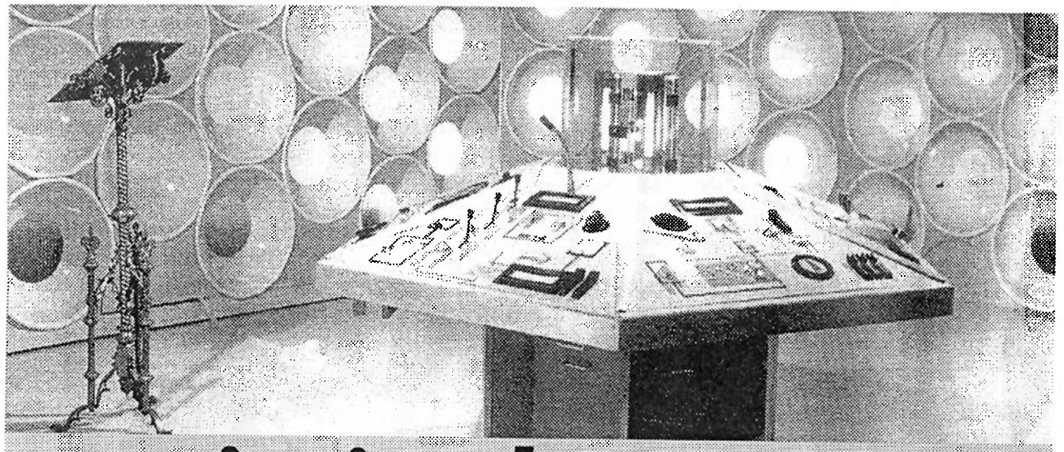
a comic by tina


Hi. You're pretty. Am I?
No. Not really. Go away.
But don't you want to be friends? I like you, you're pretty.
You're filthy
How could you say that?
You smell, Roger. Tout les temps.
Hey look, here comes the hair lady!
Ahhh! Not that big haired lady. C'mon let's get out of here.
Roger. Lenny. Wheres yous guys off to?
Guys?
I thought I was filthy and you didn't want to be my friend.
You might be filthy & like Pee Wee and all, but she's a FREAK!



A TRIP IN THE TARDIS

Doctor Who Musings by Sean C. Duffey

It was a Saturday night in November, eight years ago. I was fourteen years old, barely into my freshman year of high school. It was around 11:30 and I was trying to find something to watch on television. I usually watched *Saturday Night Live*, but on this night, there was a WWF wrestling special on instead. I was never fond of pro-wrestling, and I wasn't any closer to liking it that night.

I flipped around, and there was nothing worthwhile on, until I momentarily landed on the local PBS station. I saw a spaceship fly by the screen. I skipped past and then turned back after my brain processed what I saw. It was a spaceship, somewhat cheesy looking, but very cool all the same – I figured it couldn't be any worse than a balding, blonde-haired fat guy in banana-colored speedos. So I watched. The scene switched to the bridge of the spaceship. It was chintzy and it looked flimsy, but it somehow didn't matter. It drew me in. A tall man with brown, curly hair, wearing an enormous scarf, walked onto the set. It hit me that I was watching *Doctor Who*. I remembered that my father used to watch it when I was a toddler. I continued watching this episode and when it was over, I was hooked. I never watched an episode of *Saturday Night Live* again.

The episode was a 1978 story, called "The Invasion of Time." It starred Tom Baker as the mysterious Doctor. The story took place on his home planet Gallifrey, the world of the Time Lords. There were creatures invading Gallifrey called the Sontarans, which reminded me of "Mr. Potato-Heads" gone bad. There were garishly robed Time Lords, Shobogans from the wilds of outer Gallifrey, and the Doctor's scantily clad companion, Leela. When I first saw it, my brain acknowledged how bad the special effects were, and how very 1970s the show looked, but it didn't matter. I was entranced by it. It held me mesmerized for over two hours, which was impressive considering how short my attention span was back then. I grew up on high-budget, high gloss science fiction like *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Dune*, but this, to me, was greater than all of them.

Since then, I have watched every available episode of *Doctor Who*, gone to conventions, joined clubs, met other fans, and even written some material on the subject (although nothing has been printed outside of a fan letter to *Doctor Who Magazine*, which was printed in issue #163). I am a confessed *Doctor Who* fan – a "Whovian," a "Whosier," or a "Whonut," if you will. I am quite proud of it too. I have no shame about loving the show, and no qualms with talking about it on a critical level, as I would literature or art. Some scoff at that.

What puts Americans off from watching *Doctor Who* is the look of the show. Yes, it is low budget, and you can see the wires holding the spaceships up, but special effects and the look of a television show or a movie are only superficial. They are only an added bonus. The *Star Wars* trilogy had amazing special effects and a decent story, but take away the story and all you'd have are nifty spaceships. You'd have *Waterworld* or *Sea Quest. Star Trek: The Next Generation* ran for seven years because thought went into it, beyond special effects and design. There was emphasis on strong stories and characters. Granted, it took a couple of seasons to really get there.

Doctor Who ran for twenty-six years on the BBC in England. It also has been in reruns in America and in syndication and on PBS since the early 1970's. That's no small feat. it took creativity and imagination to keep the show running successfully for so long. It took good story writing and enthusiasm. Sure, there were B-Movie effects and the sets and costumes were some-times of poor quality or design, but the stories were good. Some have complained that the stories were too formulaic and lacked characterization. I agree that some episodes were like that, but that had more to do with the time they were made in.

In the late 60's, for instance, campiness was in vogue with shows like *Batman* and *The Avengers*. *Doctor Who* was caught in that. The primary features were far-out set and costume designs and, of course, the weekly *Who* monster. Comic book kitsch was in, but the stories, although formulaic, were still good.

The episodes of the early 70's were excellent and the characterization was heightened, but a little James Bond crept in with a greater emphasis placed on action and gadgetry, and the old campiness occasionally cut through . With twenty-six seasons of material, there are bound to be a few blemishes. Not every episode of every show can be golden, but the bad ones often show risk taking. Without risk taking, no new ground can be broken.

As I've always told my friends, who sometimes make fun of *Doctor Who*, for every bad episode there are nine great ones, and even the worst ones have some little nugget that saves them. Take, for example, "The Horns of Nimon," from the seventeenth season. It is an episode that has been belittled by fans and foes alike for it's bad special effects, cheesy monster and overall poor story, reminiscent of old B-movie serials, or early television sci-fi. Despite all of that, it had a few very good qualities. Tom Baker's portrayal of the Doctor was still very entertaining and kept things moving, and the Doctor's companion, Romana, took on a stronger role in the story than most previous female companions. She actually faced off with the creature, Nimon, while the Doctor was otherwise occupied.

To really appreciate how strong the series is, you have to take a few steps back, and look at the entire continuity of *Doctor Who*. Even though it began in 1963, no one then could have predicted what changes the series would take. The continuity of the series makes sense, which is difficult to maintain when dealing with time travel stories. The life of the Doctor unfolds, changes, and matures in a way that makes sense and is believable. Every episode adds to the character, and things are revealed about his origins and motivations. His characterization often comes through his relationships with others, namely the often human companions he travels with. In each of his regenerations, the Doctor evolves and adapts. The adaptation isn't in his physical appearance, but in his psychological make-up. Each Doctor is intrinsically the same—a resourceful genius, staunchly opposed to evil—but the personality changes to adapt.

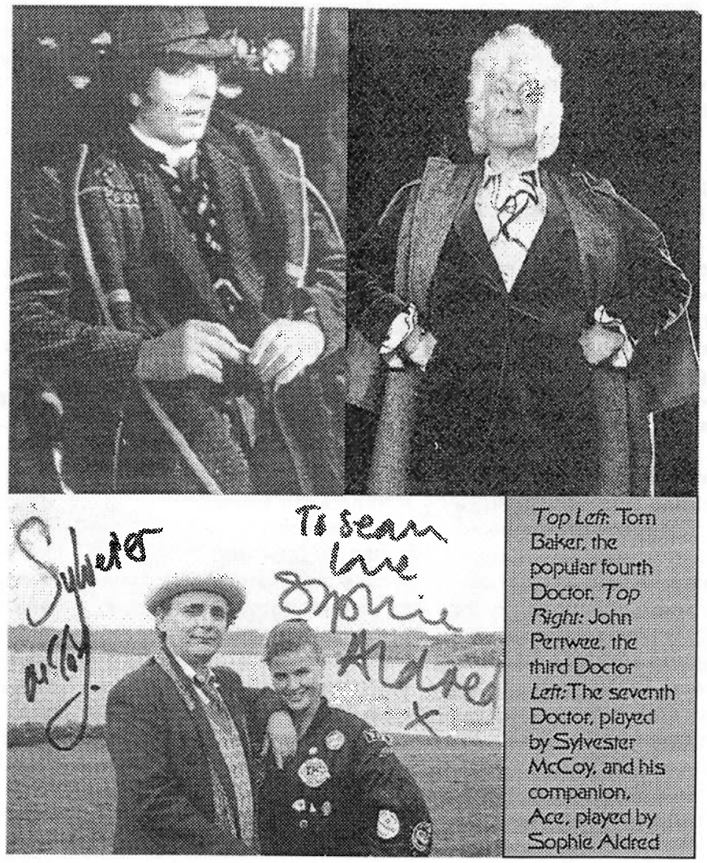
The Doctor began as an elderly scientist and an exile, separated from his own race for reasons known only to himself, moving through time and space, trying to stay hidden from his people, the Time Lords. His stolen ship, the TARDIS, was old and malfunctioning, and he had difficulty controlling it, and he never knew where it would land next. He only wanted to be left alone with his granddaughter. He was thrown into his adventures because of his conscience and the actions of companions he was forced to travel with — they got into trouble and the Doctor had to rescue them. He started out as a reluctant anti-hero, but as he traveled, fighting tyranny and saving whole worlds, he changed and became a hero. The second Doctor was younger, better suited to active heroics, and his personality was warmer, presumably due to his former self's interaction with humans. He became

more actively involved with the fight against evil.

Eventually, he found himself in a situation too great to handle alone and he had to ask the Time Lords for help. They fixed things, but the Doctor was forced to surrender. The Time Lords tried the Doctor, and exiled him to Earth, in a new body. He was further immersed in humanity's struggles, and his only escapes were instances when the Time Lords used him as their unwilling agent. After a situation arose where he had to save his own people, he was released, and freed to roam the cosmos, but remained on Earth by choice. He began seeking out evil, and looking for beings in need.

The third and fourth Doctors were true heroes—brave, courageous, and infallible. However, the more alien fourth Doctor was no longer constrained by his previous incarnation's ties to Earth, and began to roam again. He was a confident champion. He fought, won, and moved on – in the process, he also made more enemies, and those who were nearest to him were more endangered as his gambits grew in scope. The fifth Doctor was young, reckless, and made mistakes. His battles grew more difficult and the costs were greater. In a particularly bloody battle, he lost one of his companions. He continued on, but the victories were harder won, and the costs became greater. The sixth Doctor was arrogant, but still a brash hero, although, in reaction to the even more dire circumstances he found himself in, his methods were sometimes extreme. His tactics of old were no longer as effective or safe, and his opposition was growing more fierce, and the risks to innocent lives were increasing as well. The Doctor's strategy had to change. Things had to be assessed, planned, and executed with precision. The seventh Doctor was the manipulator and a sometimes ruthless player, using whatever means he needed to reach his goals with minimum loss of life, no matter what the response to his actions may have been. His aims were still the same, but the methods, though effective, became questionable. There was no time for doubt, and the consequences were often too great to fret over the reactions of those close to him, He was detached from humanity, as he was in the beginning, but now it was out of necessity rather than by birth.

Over the twenty-six seasons of *Doctor Who*, the Doctor became three-dimensional and matured and grew in ways which we do; adapting and changing to fit new circumstances in his environment, but more drastically. Each regeneration is a reaction to the needs of the Doctor, a chosen adaptation. Although, we may know who



Top Left: Tom Baker, the popular fourth Doctor. *Top Right:* John Pertwee, the third Doctor *Left:* The seventh Doctor, played by Sylvester McCoy, and his companion, Ace, played by Sophie Aldred

he is as a person, but we still don't know who the Doctor really is. That's the mystique of the character. That's what makes him intriguing. The *Doctor Who* movie that premiered on the Fox network in May carried on the mystery and added significantly to the character. The seventh Doctor was at the end of his regeneration, and it was apparent that a long time had passed since we last saw him. He was a different sort of person. He seemed more mellow, maybe even content. It made me wonder what happened. What adventures were missed? What happened to his old companion, Ace? Were more old scores settled? Was he retired? New mysteries.

When he regenerated into the new, younger, eighth Doctor, it seemed the character was vibrant and magical again, and seemed unburdened by emotional weight or scars from the past. It seemed as if the Doctor had found his innocence again. At the end of the movie he is, presumably, headed off for new worlds and adventures once again.

The appeal of *Doctor Who*, for me, has always been the Doctor, himself. The alien, yet human, nature of the character, the history, and the mystery. There is so much in the show for anyone to sink their teeth into. It goes beyond things like special effects, costumes, and other trappings. It's escapist entertainment, and it's good storytelling. ✤

Dr. Who Sidebar

by jeff

Once when I was in high school, me and my friends were together at this guy Aaron's house. I believe Sean Duffy (the author of the accompanying *Doctor Who* story) was there, but given what I remember, I hope not. I distinctly recall picking up a pumpkin and setting it on a trashcan. "Look everyone," I said, "It's a *Doctor Who* robot."

My friends all laughed at that one – *Doctor Who* jokes were pretty common for us. We found the show a particularly easy target with it's low budget special effects (most likely the height of technology back in the sixties). We'd make fun of the show constantly, but showed our ignorance by referring to the Doctor as "Doctor Who" (which was the show's title, not the lead character's name) and by getting the name of certain characters and props wrong, like calling the Doctor's time travelling Police Box the "Tarter" instead of the TARDIS.

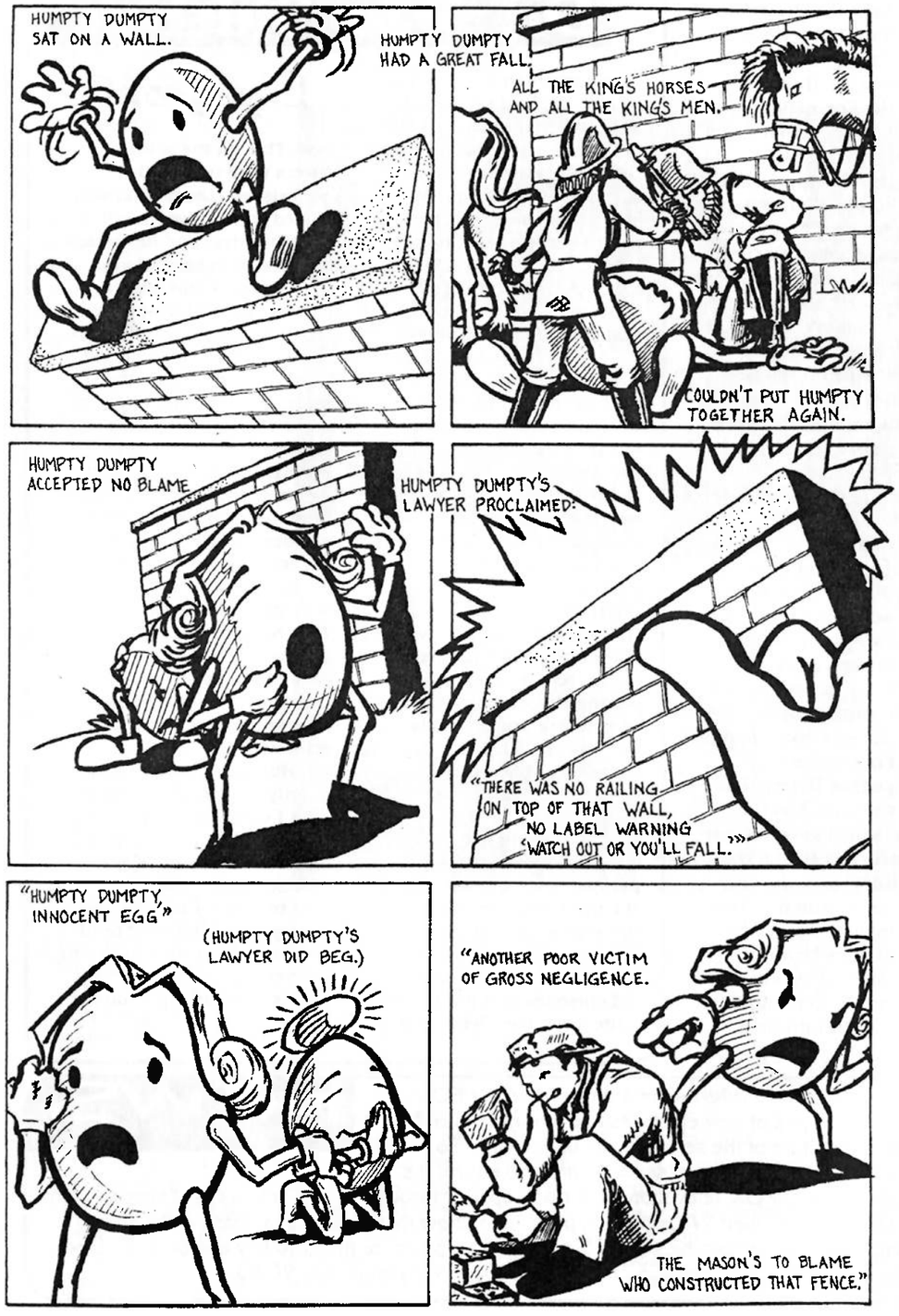
Now, some five years later, I've got a different perspective on *Doctor Who*. Having been introduced to the series care of the recent FOX TV Movie/Pilot, I decided to take a look at the old episodes and found myself quite impressed with what I saw. Though the special effects were practically nonexistent, *Doctor Who* was indeed an intelligent, well-written/acted, and fun series. The Doctor in his various regenerations was often a charismatic and appealing character whose solutions to the numerous problems with which he was faced were inventive and delighting. I'm particularly fond of John Pertwee, Tom Baker, and Peter Davidson, actors who played the role back to back from the sixties to the early eighties. In fact, I'd wager to say that the storytelling on *Doctor Who* is equal to and sometimes surpasses *Star Trek & Star Trek: The Next Generation* as far a ingenuity goes (however, in my opinion, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* still ranks as the best sci-fi series).

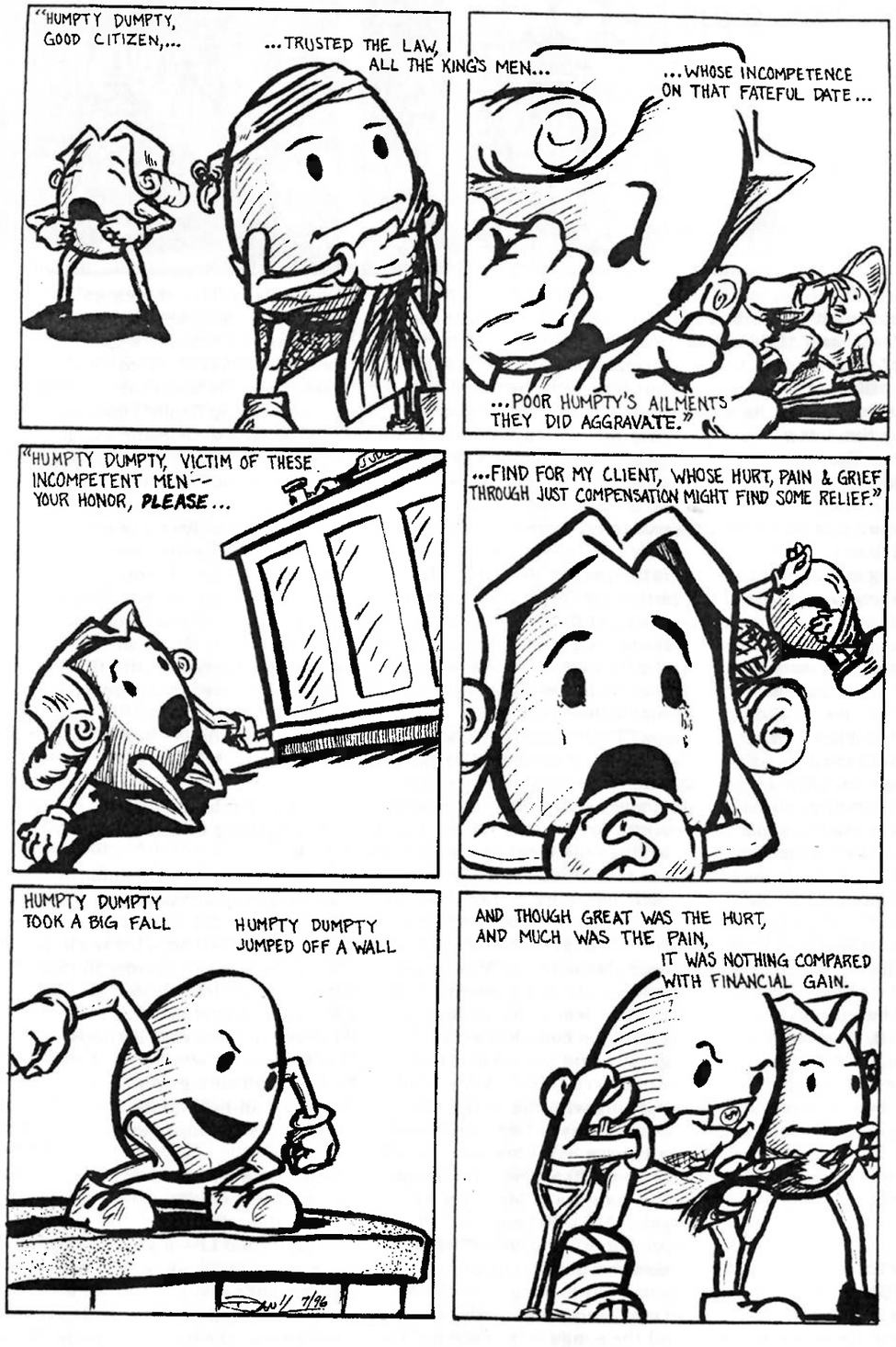
Having now been thoroughly educated on *Doctor Who* I can't help but urge everyone I know to watch it on PBS – it's a lot of fun, and instantly addicting. And to Sean, I offer my apologies – I never should have made fun of something I never really watched. My foot is now sitting firmly inside my mouth. ✤

NEWS

In May, the *Doctor Who* movie premiered on the FOX network, with hopes of new episodes and a bright future for the show. The future of the series is still undecided. So, if you liked what you saw and want to see *Doctor Who* return, it's time to act. Write to FOX Television, either on paper or through e-mail or you could check out the *Doctor Who* page on their Website. The point is to show that there is a fan base and a strong viewership ready to support the series. So put pen to paper, or finger to key and save the Doctor! Write to: Fox Broadcasting Co., P.O. Box 900, Beverly Hills, Ca. 90213.

Humpty Dumpty by Daniel Langsdale


HUMPTY DUMPTY SAT ON A WALL.
HUMPTY DUMPTY HAD A GREAT FALL.
ALL THE KING'S HORSES AND ALL THE KING'S MEN.
COULDN'T PUT HUMPTY TOGETHER AGAIN.
HUMPTY DUMPTY ACCEPTED NO BLAME
HUMPTY DUMPTY'S LAWYER PROCLAIMED:
"THERE WAS NO RAILING ON TOP OF THAT WALL, NO LABEL WARNING 'WATCH OUT OR YOU'LL FALL.'"
"HUMPTY DUMPTY, INNOCENT EGG"
(HUMPTY DUMPTY'S LAWYER DID BEG.)
"ANOTHER POOR VICTIM OF GROSS NEGLIGENCE.
THE MASON'S TO BLAME WHO CONSTRUCTED THAT FENCE."


"HUMPTY DUMPTY, GOOD CITIZEN,...
...TRUSTED THE LAW, ALL THE KING'S MEN...
...WHOSE INCOMPETENCE ON THAT FATEFUL DATE...
...POOR HUMPTY'S AILMENTS THEY DID AGGRAVATE."
"HUMPTY DUMPTY, VICTIM OF THESE INCOMPETENT MEN-- YOUR HONOR, PLEASE...
...FIND FOR MY CLIENT, WHOSE HURT, PAIN & GRIEF THROUGH JUST COMPENSATION MIGHT FIND SOME RELIEF."
HUMPTY DUMPTY TOOK A BIG FALL
HUMPTY DUMPTY JUMPED OFF A WALL
AND THOUGH GREAT WAS THE HURT, AND MUCH WAS THE PAIN, IT WAS NOTHING COMPARED WITH FINANCIAL GAIN.

record reviews

Bunnygrunt
"Johnny Angel" b/w "Boy Meets Wall" and "I Dated a Zombie" 7"
Septophilia

This record is not quite as enjoyable as the *Action Pants* LP or their other 7"s, but it fairly good. It's mostly a fifties retro disc, with the band's rather straightforward and bland cover of Shelley Fabares' "Johnny Angel" serving as the A-Side and two fifties flavored originals (which are much better than the cover, by the way) on the B-Side.

"Boy Meets Wall" shows the bands more masculine side with Matt taking over the vocal chores – it's your typical fifties lovesong, but culminates with the death of the song's protagonist. I found myself laughing quite maliciously as Mr. Lovesick Racer crashes into a wall. "I Dated a Zombie", despite its unfortunate shortness, is the best of all three songs.

It seems, the song's protagonist is upset because she'd love to kiss her boyfriend and take him to the dance, but she can't because he's dead. If I wanted to put more thought into it, I'd almost think that she was the "Betty" whom lost her car racer boyfriend in "Boy Meets Wall," but I'm sure she isn't. I guess I just look too much for continuity in music. ***-GJB***

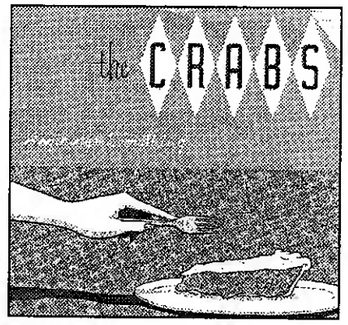
(Septophilia Records PO Box 3461 Maplewood, Mo 63143)

Corm
Audio Flame Kit
Shute/Dischord

With each record they release, Corm have consistently grown and evolved. When they began, their songs were essentially well-written, yet fairly straight forward emo songs – but now with their first full-length record, *Audio Flame Kit*, they have matured into a band whose music cannot be easily described by genre-labels. The songs on *Audio Flame Kit* are extremely diverse, ranging from very soft to very loud, from introspective to angry. The lyrics are highly emotive and intelligently written, with the music being a perfect match for the feelings and ideas vocalist Alex Ficker expresses through his distinctive voice.

"Then I Built My Own Violin" is a somber instrumental that works well as the album opener, setting the stage so to speak for the varied sound and feelings the band will display on the rest of the record. Immediately following is "Architecture" – perhaps the best song on the record, it features a wonderful interplay between Alex Ficker's lead vocals and guitarist John Davis' backing vocals and an infectious combination of guitars and percussion that works well to keep your head bobbing with the music. The band's musical dynamics and intensive lyrics are showcased in songs like "Though I Speak in the Tongues of Men and Angels," "10,000 Leagues," "Royal Air Force," and "Slim" while their hardcore sensibilities come out in songs like "Seven Days" and "Gospel Chariots." Of all the songs on the album, I'm particularly fond of "Leaves" with its great lyrics, and "Call Me Ishmael" with its segues between different speeds and melodies. The instrumental, "It's a Gospel Song Really", finishes out the record the same way it opens, offering a certain amount of closure and continuity to the songs you've just heard.

This is easily one of my favorite records to come out this summer, and it's become a constant on my stereo. If you get a chance, check Corm out on tour – their shows are extremely energetic, and they're really tight live. Trust me, you won't be disappointed. — ***GJB*** (Shute Records PO Box 2291 Kensington, MD 20891)



The Crabs
***Anything & Everything* 7"**
K

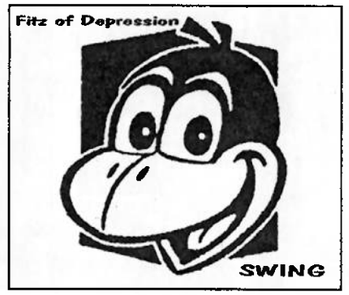
There's something unfair about having independent comics' prodigal, Adrian Tomine illustrate record art – his work is so expressive and wonderful that it completely influences the way I feel about the music on the records he works on. Perhaps he's K's secret weapon, with the whole staff sitting around and saying: "Ah-ha! Tomine's art will make this the most fantastic record on the planet, guaranteed!" I'm sure he's the reason why I like the Softies' *It's Love* better than the recent Slumberland LP – it's not that the music on the other LP isn't as good, it's just that his work leaves such an impression that it makes you like the music more.

With that said, the cover of the Crabs' *Anything & Everything* 7" features a simple and evocative Tomine illustration of a woman's slender hand bringing a fork down to cut into a pristine slice of pie. Just a glance at the art, and I knew I'd like the record. Once again, K's patented "Tomine Attack" had quite effectively given me a bias.

However, there's some question as to how positive that bias is. Yes, the Crabs have released another sturdy set of pop songs to add to their impressive discography, but I must stress that although the songs are relatively good, I'm not hurling myself around the room with glee when I hear them. Yes, I like them, but in a quiet, head nodding sort of way. Not that that's a bad thing, really.

The A-Side, "Anything & Everything", is a straightforward sounding rock song featuring Lisa's groovy, bum-shakin' percussion and John's distinctive vocals. The first B-side, "Prom Night" is a fifties-style "golden oldie" instrumental complimented by a saxophone. However, the record's second B-Side, "Sugar Town," really steals the show with its sparse-sounding guitars and some soft, throaty, Cath Carroll-esque vocals by Lisa.

All and all, *Anything & Everything* is an enjoyable 7" that deserves a listen or to. It's worth it for "Sugar Town", alone, and the added bonus of Tomine's art makes for at least ten minutes of solid staring. — ***GJB*** (K, PO Box 7154 Olympia, WA 98507)



The Delta '72
The R&B of Membership
Touch & Go

It's pretty bad when a band only has one song, but when that songs is as good as the Delta '72's, it really doesn't matter.

After almost two years of playing out and a fantastic debut 7" split-released by Kill Rock Stars and Dischord, the Delta '72 have finally come out with an LP, and it more than lives up to expectations. A collection of songs melding hardcore with the classic slide guitar/harmonica/electric organ R&B of old, *The R&B of Membership* completely rocks (I once swore I'd never use that as a descriptive, but it works pretty well, here). The songs do tend to blend with their similar guitar riffs and organs, but the sheer coolness of it the music and skill of the band more than redeems it.

Songs that stand out are "On the Rocks" (rerecorded from the original 7" release), this record's first single, "Rich Girls Like to Steal," "Satellite," and "On the Lam."

Despite some repetition, this is all-in-all a very good record with its new twist on punk rock and R&B. — ***GJB*** (Touch & Go PO Box 25520 Chicago, IL 60625)

Fitz Of Depression
Swing
K

I was absolutely delighted when I finally got to listen to this band. It's so fun to listen to something great when you think it's gonna be shit. After reading the press release I thought to myself," oh boy, another 'old school' 90's punk band." You see, i grew up on what you might call "old school' or original punk. There was a reason for that music, for why it started. Unfortunately, nowadays it seems that a lot of 90's punkers try to recapture that essence without understanding the reasons behind them. Or they go too far, thinking too hard on the subjects. This band definitely doesn't fit that mold. It's so nice to hear a band, know that they must have grown up listening to the same music i did, and not bastardize it in one way or another. It is possible to draw inspiration and influence from a band or any source without mimicing them.

Fitz of Depression obviously draw alot of their sound from former punk-rock acts such as The Misfits, The Jam, and The Damned, but this band definitely doesn't sound 15 years old.

The opening and closing acts of their newest smash "We Three" and "Shimmy" are beautifully driven instrumentals. Definately easy to listen to. I wanted to drag the old black t-shirts out of my closet.

I'm telling you, these guys have their shit together. The music is tight, fast, choppy, and graceful. The lyrics are a little obscure, but Mikey Dee's vocals musically fit the rest of the band. It's not often I hear a band that realizes that a voice is a instrument too, not any more important, and not less.

So, if your looking for a strong, fast-paced, no frills/no whining joyride, jump on! This band rocks! — ***Jake Warrenfeltz***

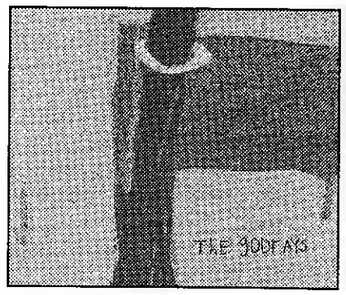
(K Records Box 7154 Olympia, WA 98507)

Girls Against Boys
House of GVSB
Touch & Go

After the past couple months of grazing mass market glossies in shopping mall bookstores, I've really come to dislike this band. From their embarrassing sexed-up cocktail photos in *AP* to their "Cute Band Alert" in *Sassy*, I've begun to slowly build a rather negative opinion of them. They don't make music for the same reasons I like music – they're not interested in writing sincere songs that mean something, they're only interested in writing music that people will buy. This is evident in all of their recent magazine appearances, and especially in their recent signing to DGC. Some bands move to majors without losing that much of their integrity – Girls Against Boys are not one of those bands.

But the sad thing is, they're not even on a major label yet. Yet to listen to their new LP, or see their ads, you probably wouldn't be able to tell the difference. The record is extremely accessible in the Stone Temple Pilots sense, the songs fitting into the generic mold of mainstream music. The lyrics are dumb, the guitars catchy and altogether predictable. Not that they were all that great before, but *Venus Luxure No. 1 Baby* was a much smarter album – this one could have been written by anyone. It might be a little better musically than say Bush or Sponge, but that's because of the band's diverse influences (ranging from jazz to dub), not out of any overt intention to make something good.

All this aside, the record isn't that bad a listen. But it's hard to forget that their music used to be much more complex lyrically, dealing rather wryly with traditional relationship-type subjects. Keeping this in mind, I feel rather guilty humming along with "Superfire" or "Crash (X-Rated Car)" – but I



hum along anyway. Still, obvious nonsense like "X-Head is X-Vibe in dust wet rust super-fire" or "Click click song song I love it when they turn the flame on/ Kiss cool cool kiss I love it when they turn the bliss on" makes me feel more than a little embarrassed for them. I mean, it's one thing to write honest songs that people can relate to, but it's another thing to write obvious shit for record sales. But hey, it's their choice, and it doesn't mean that I still have to listen to them. **— *GJB***

(Touch & Go PO Box 25520 Chicago, IL 60625)

The Godrays
Double 7"
Vernon Yard

These days, everyone seems to have something bad to say about the Godrays. Typically, they tend to compare them to Alex and Phoebe's previous work in the much lamented and overrated Small Factory. "The songs are too loud, there's too much distortion," they whine, "it's just not the same."

Well, that's not a very fair estimate of the Godrays. Of course it's not same as Small Factory – it's a new project, a new name, a new band. Small Factory broke up so its members could pursue other things – the Godrays is one, Flora Street is the other. The whole point of a new project is to explore other ways of making music. That doesn't make the new stuff necessarily bad, just different. The important thing is to judge the band's music on its own merits, not on the merits of past accomplishments.

And honestly, if you are going to compare the two, things really aren't all that different. Considering Small Factory's final LP, *For If You Cannot Fly*, the Godrays stuff isn't much of a surprise. Alex's vocals are still there, smart and honest as ever. Phoebe is still playing the drums, although the guitars are a tiny bit louder than Small Factory's, but not much louder than say "The Last Time That We Talked." And certainly not what one would consider rock – a definite shock to devoted tweekids, but not rock when compared to say Unwound. Hell, Lush is probably more rock than the Godrays.

"Songs For TV Stars" is your standard pop song and could easily be mistaken as a Small Factory song if not for the Godrays sticker on the record. "Crummy" uses some feedback and distortion for effect, but doesn't stray too terribly much from pop. "No Arms Are Good For Holding" is probably the best song on the two records, with its loud guitars and hooks – it's got some bite to it, but it's certainly pop. Finally, "Film Music" is an instrumental wash of feedback and droning guitars that is both unexpected and delightful – certainly an interesting enough evolution.

In general, I've found the Godrays to be as likable as their much-lauded past incarnation – if you liked Small Factory, then pick it up. And for heaven's sake, don't let change scare you. **— *GJB***
(Vernon Yard, 104 W. 29th Street, New York, NY, 10001)

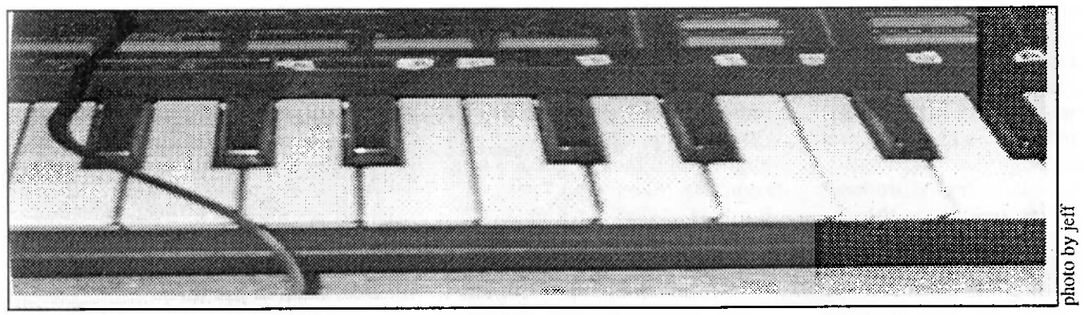


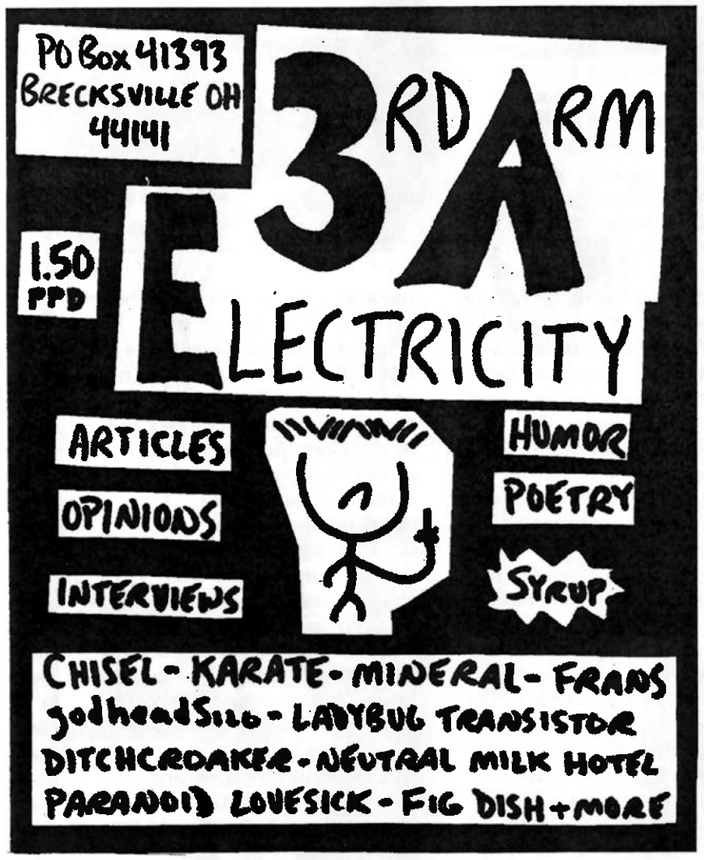
photo by jeff

Jawbox
Jawbox
TAG/Atlantic Records

It's sad that nowadays so much art – from film to music to comics – cannot be judged without first examining the creative baggage that goes into making it. But the fact of the matter is that most of today's creative endeavors are monopolized by multinational corporations whose sole reason for publishing it is to capitalize on it. The only way for anything to be financially viable is for it to be specifically developed to appeal to as wide an audience as possible – to gain the appeal, the meticulously the art in question must be meticulously planned so that people will see a common reflection of themselves in it. This is achieved use of cliched topics – love songs, youth alienation, racism, etc. – or through using ambiguous themes which can receive the personal projections of the audience. This dishonest construction of art, transfers it into a commercial product. A thing, like an appliance – something people think they need, whose use they'll enjoy. In other words, a reason for them to spend money.

In the past fifty years or so, as music has gradually become more and more of a commercial product, the human love that has gone into its creation has all but dissolved. Consider the current hits of this summer (1996), and you'll see just what I mean. Alannis Morrisette's songs were written by the former guitar tech of Night Ranger, a man, writing about female issues; No Doubt, with their dollar store ska and pseudo-feminism; Nada Surf with their song about high school "popularity" designed to appeal to the "geek" in all of us; and Bush with their songs following the cookie-cutter pattern of Nirvana – this is what today's popular music is, test-marketed alienation designed to bring high school kids and young adults into the record stores and concert arenas. Music reduced to the level of extra-value meals, with no ounce of integrity, or honesty.

Tina and I have argued about this, and she feels that no music at all can be made on



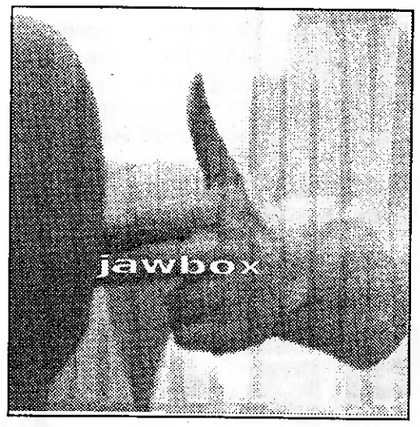
a major label and retain its integrity or honesty. That being a corporate employee precludes that. I largely agree with her sentiments, but however, feel that there are some cases where a band does retain its integrity or honesty – that their attitudes about their music, and the contract they've drafted with their label have given them an important place in music – that is the place of a exit. An accessible major label band that retains its ties with indie labels and whose place on a major (whether it was intentional or unintentional) has the function of bringing new kids in contact with indie labels, and therefore lead to their eventual rejection of the music on the majors.

Jawbox is one of those bands. Their records, though released on Atlantic, are still essentially the same records they released on Dischord and DeSoto. The songs haven't changed, the themes haven't changed, and most of all the *band* has not changed. They still release the vinyl of their records and their singles on DeSoto, and still support indie bands by taking them on tour with them. Videos and HFStival performances aside, they are the same band they were four years go, albeit signed to a major label.

Their new self-titled LP is in keeping with the records they've released in the past. In fact, it's perhaps more like their second Dischord release, *Novelty* than like their loud, clattering 1994 major label record, *For Your Own Special Sweetheart*. The songs are sharply written, melodic rock songs with obvious emo, hardcore and jazz influences – much in the same vein as *Novelty* songs like "Cut Off", "Tracking", and "Channel 3".

However, the record also features some tracks laced with experimental jazz percussion – "Won't Come Off" and "Empire of One" both have some of the most expert percussion I've heard in quite some time, particularly in "Won't Come Off" with its almost total lack of guitars and complete reliance on Zach Barocas' melodic drums.

Other songs of note are "Livid", which is perhaps the perfect pop song, and "Capillary Live" with its excellent dynamics and sharp lyrics. There's also a wry, tongue-in-cheap cover of Tori Amos' abysmal "Cornflake Girl," with the band



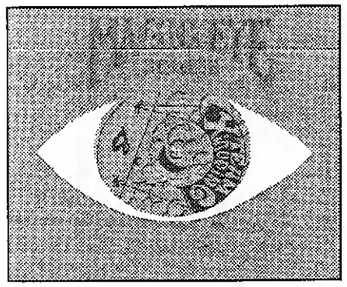
playing a straightforward, yet very funny version of the original. When J sings "This is not/this is not really happening", I can't help wondering if there's something clandestine at work behind the words. I have my theories, but am a little reluctant to say them here.

Pick up this record if you get the chance. It's well-written, and equally as good as their last releases. And if you feel a little guilty about it, get it on vinyl from the band's label, DeSoto (vinyl is cooler, anyway). Jawbox are not your typical major label band, and this is definitely a record worth getting. **–GJB**
(Desoto Records PO Box 60335 Washington, DC 20039)

Magic Eye Singles
***Gold* 7"**
Magic Eye Singles

Despite the fact that many of the bands contributing to the Magic Eye Singles series have very few similarities in regards to their individual styles, they definitely seem to fit together on record. Each of the three records released thus far also fit together as easily as the songs do – and it's more than just the fact that sleeve art is virtually the same on each record, it's that the songs themselves seem to have been picked because each of them share the same sort of sensibility, that same feel carried by each record in the series. Whether this is intentional or subconscious, the fact that all of the songs seem to fit regardless of differences in style provides a continuity between the comps that most seven-inch series don't have. Generally speaking, your average compilation series is just a collection of songs haphazardly stuck together with the series' originator failing to consider whether or not they work well together. Perhaps the most satisfying thing about the Magic Eye series is that rather than being a disjointed collection, each edition of the series and the series as whole feels like a complete and cohesive work.

That said, it should be fairly obvious that *Gold* is just as good a record as the previous releases in the Magic Eye Singles series. The first song on the *Gold*, Yesteryear's "City Biking" was the product of a "priority mail" recording session in which the duo recorded the song back and forth through the mail before ever meeting in person – the resulting track sounds almost live with its seamless production. Samara Lubelski, featured recently on



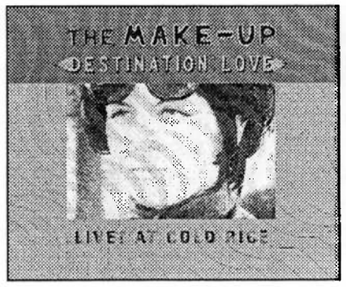
the Sonora Pine LP, offers the soft and somber "Goodbye Sweetness". Team Xiaoping's "I Though I Did" is by far the longest song to appear on a Magic Eye Singles seven-inch, and features some great guitarwork and vocals from Seam's William Shin and Soo Young Park.

The fourth entry in the series, *White*, is due out fairly soon. Afterwards, Magic Eye plans on releasing a CD compiling the four records, in addition to adding bonus tracks that they were not able to out on the seven-inches. ***-GJB***
(Magic Eye Singles P.O. Box 6165 Baltimore MD 21231)

The Make-Up
Destination: Love; Live at Cold Rice
Dischord

I never cared too much for Nation of Ulyseus, always sort of thinking of them as a tongue-in-cheek Rites of Spring. So when I first heard that Ian Svenonius and his ex-NOU cohorts Steve Gamboa and James Canty, were in a new band, I wasn't all that interested – that is until I heard their fantastic 7"s and saw them live, myself becoming a genuine believer.

To the uninitiated, The Make-Up seem to be a parody of glam rock, R&B and gospel music, but beneath all the theatrics, there is a definite subtext at work – a definite intelligence behind the music they make. Just the other night, Tina and I were watching a rather funny televangelist and suddenly realized that he was

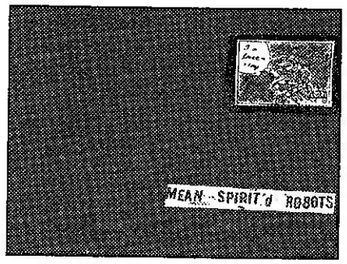


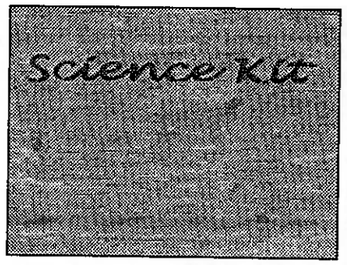
talking about something alluded to in "How Pretty Can U Get," one of the many great songs on *Destination: Love; Live at Cold Rice*. It was then that I realized that the "gospel yeh-yeh" is trying convey something very important, but I'm afraid I'm a little unsure as to what that is.

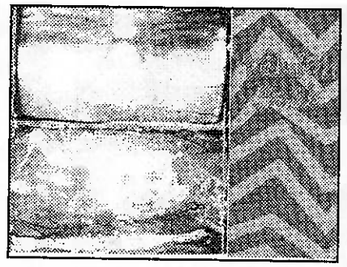
Musically, *Destination: Love; Live at Cold Rice* is a mix of funk, gospel and emo – a stew of complete infectiousness. The faux live sound of the record is authentic enough to capture the vibrancy of Ian Svenonius' enlightened sermons. Listening to it is almost as great as attending a Make-Up show – it feels almost entirely the same, generating the same sort of excitement out of a boom box or stereo. And you'd better believe it, baby. *-GJB*
(Dischord 3819 Beecher ST, NW Washington, DC 20007)

Mean Spirit'd Robots
***I Heart God's Girls* 7"**
Pottery

This is an oddly intriguing record. Mean Spirit'd Robots – who appeared previously on Pottery's excellent *The Wheel Method* 7" – make head nodding pop songs with what appear to be unconventional instruments. Granted, guitars do appear here, however I am completely







unable to discern what the other sources are for the marvelous sounds they meld together into their songs. They don't sound like synthesizers, they don't sound like regular instruments – I'm at a complete loss.

My favorite songs on this 7" are "Fiery Basement" with its soft merger of strange sounds, Mountain Goats lo-fi, and dreamy new wave pop songs sensibilities; "From You I Fly" with its unusual, yet ultra-catchy lyrics, guitars, and keyboards; and "The Distribution of Wealth in This Country Really Sux" for the sheer genius and honesty of its title, and its brilliant, noisy sounds. If I was in a band, I would take inspiration from these guys. ***—GJB***

(Pottery Records PO Box 31 Swarthmore, PA 19081)

Science Kit
"Bride of Chimes" &
"Film Score"
b/w "Madagascar" &
"Segue #12" 7"
Magic Eye Singles

As the proprietor of Magic Eye Singles, Jeffrey Alexander has proven that he has excellent taste in music and the knack for putting together compilation records that just sound right. Now, he's released a 7" by his own project, Science Kit – a pop band with honest songs and subtle hooks.

"Bride of Chimes", the first track on the A-Side, is extremely catchy, but in a non-intrusive way. The guitars move the song along with a natural ease, the vocals coming in to compliment the melodies and changes. The second song, "Film Score", is an enjoyable instrumental that showcases the band's aptitude for making heads nod with the pull of the music. The B-Side's "Madagascar" is slower than the songs on the A-Side, and much more in the traditional Versus/Superchunk-esque indie rock vein with strong leads that seamlessly mesh with the band's percussion. And the last song, "Segue #12", is an interesting instrumental that quickly bleeds into a sound slightly reminiscent of the noises locusts make on summer nights.

Besides the great music, the record also features a pretty darn cool jacket. Cut from a sheet of pine-scented woodprint wallpaper, the record's sleave is an inspiring piece of ingenuity – the wooden pattern and scent completely captures the feel of the record. After we realized what it was, Tina and I started thinking about what kinds of alternatives we had to traditional paper. It's definitely the best packaging I've seen on a record in quite some time – I even like it better than the Fireproof Press work that's been used fairly frequently lately by labels like Quarterstick and Thrill Jockey.

Science Kit have definitely put out an excellent first record. A great deal of care went into its release, and it definitely shows in both its sound and look. ***-GJB***

(Magic Eye Singles P.O. Box 6165 Baltimore, MD 21231)

Talulah Gosh
Backwash
K

Sadly, I never discovered Talulah Gosh when they were around – from around 1985 until 1988. Which isn't very surprising, considering I was about fourteen at the time and too interested in stuff like Fugazi to pay attention to indiepop – which is especially awful, because they were absolutely fantastic.

From what I can discern, *Backwash* collects everything Talulah Gosh ever recorded, including all of their singles, EPs, live Peel sessions, etc. Twenty-five songs in all, there's barely a track here that's less than immaculate. Totally superior to anything coming out at the same time, Talulah Gosh is the progenitor of all of today's indiepop (from Gloworm to the Softies to Cub), with their catchy guitars and sparkling clean vocals.

Even though they've been broken up for nearly ten years now, it's wonderful that their music can now be enjoyed in its entirety by people who never would have heard them, otherwise. ***-GJB***

(K Box 7154 Olympia, WA 98507)

P.S. on the reviews... *There was not enough room here for a proper review of the new Holiday record,* Ready, Steady, Go, *but it is by far my favorite record this summer. It is so beautiful. Josh sings like an angel. It totally keeps me calm on hectic days at work. Just thought I'd let ya know.* ***— Tina***
(March Record, P.O. Box 578396, Chicago, IL 60657).

'Zine Reviews

3rd Arm Electricity
'Zine

Most 'zines with a leaning towards punk or the rockier side of indie are complete shit. Totally serious, self-serving bunk with preachy, yet unintelligent and utterly cliched politics and a total lack of imagination. No sense of humor, no pleasantries. Just dark, festering, pussing negativity.

3rd Arm Electricity is nothing like that. In fact, out of all the 'zines I've read in the past six months or so, it's probably my absolute favorite. Totally irreverent and funny as all shit, *3rd Arm Electricity* is miles ahead of its older, lame-duck punk rock cousins. Will and Tim are two of the coolest guys to ever come out of Ohio – and it totally shows in their 'zine. They have the enthusiasm and sheer honesty of brilliant indie-pop 'zines like *Power Toot* and *Splashdown*, but are more interested in harder music (which is so cool to me, because that's where my tastes lean, too).

Will and Tim have done other 'zines in the past, and they've even been expelled from school for it! That's way cooler than getting a scholarship for doing a 'zine in my book.

I could go on and on about how much I've enjoyed this 'zine, so I better cut to the case and say what's in it. It's got a really smart interview with Chisel and another with Ladybug Transistor, Indie Detectives Episode One, fiction, lots of cool stories, and a couple of great (and hilarious) inserts.
— GJB

($1.50, 3rd Arm Electricity PO Box 41393 Brecksville, OH 44141)

Totally Fucked
mini-comic

Sorry that this is in the zine section, but there was no room left in the comics reviews. It doesn't really matter anyway, because out of all the zines *and* comics I've read in the last few months, this is my pick for the best.

These wonderful little comics, done by Jen Sbragia of Softies fame are so very honest and genuine. I got them in a huge batch of good stuff from the Spit and a Half catalog. When I read them, I totally related to Jen's "I'm too old for this shit" stories about silly little girls, depression on the bus, stupid guys making fun of her for her clothes... everything. Most of the time when I read zines or comics, I so much want to relate to something I'm reading. – I so much want to know that someone else out there goes through the same crap that I do. That someone else feels like me. And when I read these comics, I was like, "here it is! This is what I've been looking for!"

I think that Jen is on #5, but I only have 1-3 – I would just get all of them if I were you. I think they are only 25 cents each, but I'd send her a little more for postage if you order directly from her. You can also get them from the Spit and a Half catalog. Here's Jen's address: *Totally Fucked*, 4202 Southeast 26, Portland, Oregon 97202. ***— Tina***

Yakuza #8
zine

After what seemed like a very long wait, Yakuza has returned – this time full sized and offset with a full color cover and a bonus CD featuring music by Caterpillar, New Radiant Storm King, and others.

One of the things I like best about *Yakuza* is that although it does deal somewhat with music, it's more concerned with personal accounts and diaries than it is with interviewing bands. Even though Dave has made the jump to full offset, his publication still feels like a 'zine, albeit with higher production values.

In *Yakuza* #8, there's more than enough reading to keep you busy for several days – including a Moroccan Journal by Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo, a Caterpillar tour diary by Dave, a diary of Dave's aborted move to the west coast, fiction by Nicole Panter (of *Pee Wee's Playhouse* fame), and tons more. I found all of it to be totally engrossing and well-written. ***— GJB***
(Dave McGurgan P.O. Box 26039, Wilmington, DE 19899-6039)

Other stuff you should already be reading:

Chouette #1 — This is a really enthusiastic zine out of Finland. Sami and Kimmo really love music and it is this love that makes Chouette a refreshing read. It was neat for me to see a zine that loves good pop music like Belmondo, Boyracer and Henry's Dress from so far away. Plus Chouette is very nicely designed with clean and simple layouts (no type in circles here). This ish has interviews with Henry's Dress and Dada Girl, plus lots of reviews. Not sure how much cause we got it for trade: *Sami Rouhento, Rauhantie 26, 33420 Tampere, Finland.* ***— Tina***

Science Geek #3 — The newest ish of science geek is not out yet (as of press time), but I wanted to give it a plug anyway, because I know that Steve has been working really hard on it. Doug and Steve usually do Science Geek together, but this time Doug is in the peace corp in Kenya and Steve has compiled Doug's writings and done the prodcution of the zine back here in the states. I'm looking very forward to this issue, and you should be, too. *$3, Steve Spatucci, P.O. box 8641, Trenton, N.J., 08650.* ***— Tina***

le cinema

Truffaut directing Leaud in *Stolen Kisses*

I have been trying to see Francios Truffaut's 1968 film *Stolen Kisses* (Baiser Volé) for about 3 years now. *Stolen Kisses* is the second in a series of 4 fictional full length films (five if you count a short called *Antoine et Collete*) made from the 50's to the 80's chronicling one character, Antoine Doinel's, life. We first see Antoine as a 12 year old boy in Truffaut's very first feature film, *The 400 Blows* (Les Quatre Cents Coups). The first time I ever heard of this movie was at 18 when a neurotic film-geek boyfriend gave me a list of the "greatest" films of all time (according to him). Of course, I diligently saw them all. Except for *The 400 Blows*. So about 3 years ago, the Key Theater chain was closing most of their theaters in the D.C. area and since they couldn't afford "real" first-run movies, they were showing classics. One was *The 400 Blows*. I saw the film 4 times in a week and a half. It was the most amazing movie I had ever seen. My introduction into the world of the famous French New Wave of cinema was one of the most fabulous things to happen to me, actually. *400* is an honest cinema verité film shot in black and white that tells the story of 12 year old, Antoine, who has trouble in school and home and eventually ends up in a home for delinquent boys. We last see Antoine (played by actor Jean Pierre Leaud in all five movies) as he escapes the home/jail. He runs a long way, but finally ends up at the sea (something he has longed for for sometime). The final shot is a freeze frame (a very famous shot) of young Antoine's face as he looks right into the camera. So we are left, wondering, where will this little boy go, how will he survive?

Stolen Kisses is the 2nd feature in the series. Here we catch up with Antoine 10 years later. It is difficult to compare *Kisses* to the first film because of the sheer emotional power of the first. *Kisses*, on the other hand, is a whimsical comedy in which Antoine not only tries to win over an old love, but also becomes a private detective and falls in love with a much older woman.

The movie is at times sad and touching and like in many of Truffaut's pictures, surface comedy thinly vales the actions of a desperately lonely main character. As Antoine runs though the streets of Paris again, (apparently he was in and out of the Army after his escape in the last film) he seems so alone, so small, so desperate to be loved. Seeing him was like meeting an old friend again. Bittersweet.

The best thing about Truffaut's movies is his ability to capture real life situations and emotions so wonderfully. Leaud as Antoine is also a big plus in all of the films. Expect the next *rack focus* mini-zine insert to be dedicated to and all about Leaud. Meanwhile try and rent some of these (or if you ever come over, you can watch *The 400 Blows*, cause I own it.) — ***Tina***

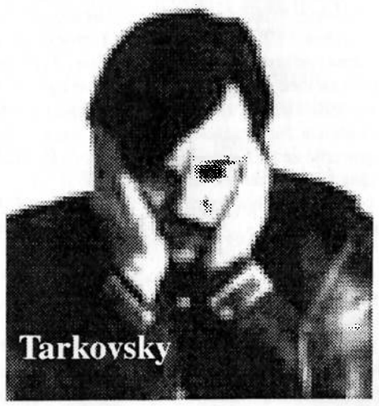
le cinema

I discovered Soviet-era Russian director, Andrei Tarkovsky purely by accident. Doug (my roommate and *Rfuel* binding-boy) and I were flipping through some of the low-watt PBS stations in the area, and stumbled upon a program devoted to foreign cinema – the feature of that particular installment being Andrei Tarkovsky's science fiction masterpiece, *Solaris*.

I watched very attentively despite the thick interference snow, totally delighted to discover something so cool in as unsuspecting a place as a tiny Alexandria, VA PBS station. I was completely hooked on Tarkovsky's slow-moving, patient shots, rich subtext and focus on both personal relationships and larger scale social interactions. As with directors Jean-Luc Godard and Krzysztof Kieslowski before him, I had to find out more about him – I also had to see all of his films. Luckily, the University of Maryland library proved to have a more than adequate cache of knowledge about him, and I had no trouble finding his two science fiction films, the aforementioned *Solaris* and *Stalker*, his historical epic, *Andrei Rublev*, and his autobiographical first feature, *My Name is Ivan*. However, there are several other Tarkovsky films unavailable in the U.S., including his final and most important film, *the Sacrifice*, which I've yet to see.

Tarkovsky was something of a fringe director in the U.S.S.R. Though films did not necessarily require big box office returns like they do in the States to be successful, they had to be approved by the Soviets. This was an often painstaking task, particularly if a Soviet official's mother-in-law did not care for a particular film. Free expression of ideas – particularly the expression of those ideas that were not created originally by the state – was not allowed, therefore Tarkovsky and others like him used metaphorical subtext to get across their messages. He found science fiction a particularly useful genre in accomplishing that, as Soviet censors viewed it as a children's genre and tended not to overly scrutinize films of that type. Though *Solaris* and *Stalker* aren't exactly true science fiction films, they're exciting in that the genre is used to mask Tarkovsky's true intentions.

Solaris, *Stalker*, and *Andrei Rublev* are relatively easy to find and are well worth a viewing by anyone seriously interested in film as a way of conveying a director's philosophy in subtle and complex ways. *My Name is Ivan* is a little harder to find – which isn't all that bad, because it was miserably cut by the original American distribution company and never properly restored. If anyone has any info on his other work, please drop me a line and let me know where you found it. Expect more on Tarkovsky in future issues of *Restaurant Fuel* or in a mini-zine supplement. —***GJB***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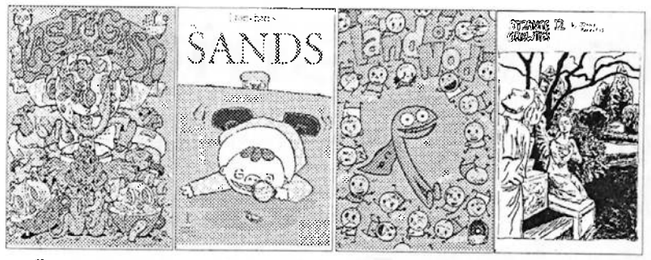


Comics reviews by Doug Fahrman

Last Gasp Comics and Stories #4
edited by Noah Mass

Heard all the hype about the underground cartoonists from the 60s? Well, here's an anthology that showcases today's best "underground" talents. Unlike many similar attempts at anthologizing comics strips, most of the stories here are actually worth reading. In fact, there are three or four stories here that would legitimize a single book, were only one of them to appear. But you, the lucky reader, get to discover great cartoonists from around the world, like genius-boy Max Andersson from Sweden, the deranged Stephan Blanquet from France and the reclusive David Fremont of San Francisco. There's even a couple of, gawrsh, gcomics by girls! So if you're looking for "cool" comics that range from the funny to profound to disgusting, Last Gasp comics and stories is a great way to get your feet wet in the world of intelligent comics.

(Last Gasp Eco-Funnies, P.O. Box 410067, San Francisco, CA 94100-0067)

The Sands #1
by Tom Hart

Tom Hart creates comics unlike most others out there. His stories bear more resemblence to poetry than to the traditional narratives found in most comic books. Basically, Tom never beats you over the head, saying, "This is what you are supposed to think!" The stories show people, their situations and words and then lets the reader draw their own conclusions about what's going on and the emotional state of the characters. Needless to say, this can be very powerful and is a welcome voice expanding the fairly narrow realm of what comics are today. Of course he draws really pretty pictures too.....

Land of Nod #2
by Jay Stephens

Watch out! This is an "alternative" comic that goes for nothing but laffs, a real rarity in the comix circle. And unlike most funny comics, it doesn't insult the reader's intelligence either. Jay Stephens is one of the only artists out there that can have his main character pooped out by a lion and have it be entertaining! Basically, though, this book is one big shaggy dog story. To quote from the letters page, "You're [Stephens] always drawing these cute and funny characters and then you kill them." This really sums up the charm of the book. Buy it! Or at least go to your local supplier of small press comics and read it off the shelf! Also, watch for #3 with the cute, frog smooshing Tutenstein!

Berlin #2
by Jason Lutes

In the second issue of Jason Lute's Berlin, the story really seems to get going. That is not to say the first issue was bad, but all it really did was establish the sense of place for the series. The second issue furthers that and has much more character interaction, making a much more satisfying comic. Central to this issue are the people in Marthe's (the main character) art class. They are pretty much like today's art students, made up of opinions and all. Still, the city of Berlin and its art and diversions are heavily researched, placing these characters that would not be out of place today into the context of the story. This makes the comic all the more powerful, commenting on today and pre-WWII Berlin. Knowing all these familiar archetypes are going to be thrust into the horror of the second Wolrd War at any time, there are great hopes for this series helping to legitimize the marginal realm of today's comics. A great book for those of you who have heard that, "Comics just aren't for kids anymore."

Dear Julia #1
by Brian Biggs

The first issue of Brian Bigg's Dear Julia proves to be an impressive use of form. Starting as a letter, then progressing to the tradtional word balloons (with unique word balloon "voices" for each character) and finishing up with a photographic essay, this comic is a marvel of technique. And the story ain't too shabby, either. To say the least, it is a bit quirky. Still, the book is easily digestible, yet bears rereading remarkably well. Is the main character crazy? Of course... But how much is real and how much is paranoia? That is the hook that catches the reader, leaving that deep down urge that drives one to the comic store every week....

above four titles available from:
(Black Eye Productions, 5135 Parc Ave #5, Montreal, QC H2V 4G3)

Strange Growths #12
by Jenny Zervakis

Getting sick of crappy cut and paste 'zines that have interviews with Cub? Well, plunck down a couple of bucks for a DIY project that actually has some merit. Something like Strange Growths. Containing a mix of autobio/slice of life strips and the naturalistic fantasy exploits of the earthworm Bumbalo, Jenny covers a lot of ground with her mini. One of the standouts of the "real" half is the illustrated story *The Fair.* Its full of dry, witty observations about the joys and horrors of the country fair. The strength of the story is that the reader realizes these are probably only a fraction of the beautiful things going on at the fair, leaving one with a rich experience from a couple pages of text and a few pictures. As for the worm strips, Bumbalo and the Lucky Fungus is really great! It drives home the fact that nature can be a fantastic, complex thing, and all humans can do is pervert it. Really a beautiful example of how powerful comics can be!

Zoomcranks #13 edited by Mark W. Cunningham and Jenny Zervakis

Need a little more than the vague descriptions in Factsheet 5 to help inform your mini comic buying habit? Well, look no further than Zoomcranks! Simply open, read, and discover your new favorite comic creators. Next, look up their addresses in the back, send them a couple a bucks and you will have achieved comic satisfaction! Some of the best in this issue are Amy Baker's story of cannibal beaver lust and David Lasky's story of heartbreak and Ramen. This fine issue also includes contributions by both editors and other mini-luminaries such as James Kochalka, Joe Chiapetta, Elizabeth Watasin, Jeff Zenick and more. A much better buy @ 2.50 than you are likely to find at ANY comic store!

both the above available from:
(909 Lancaster St., Durham NC 27701)

Please send Doug your comics for review. He'll review everything he gets. Send them to P.O. Box 803, Greenbelt, Md 20768-0803. :)

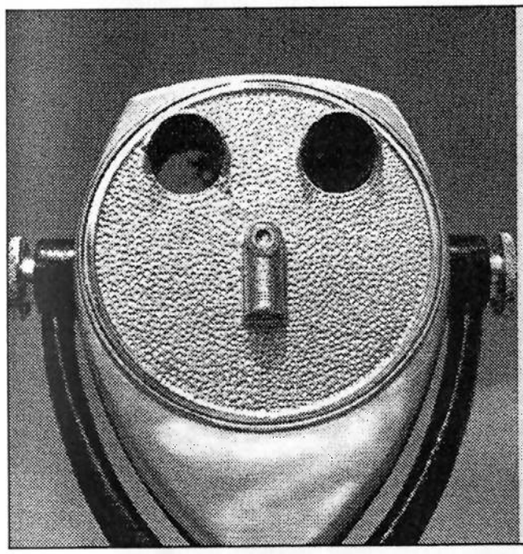
Stuff that we couldn't live without during production

Jeff's List

- *What They Did To Princess Paragon* by Robert Rodi
- *X-Files* on Friday nights
- *Doctor Who* on Saturday nights
- *Tropics and Meridians* LP by June of '44
- *3rd Arm Electricity* 'zine
- June of '44 Live with the Crownhate Ruin
- Corm's *Audio Flame Kit* CD
- Monday afternoon trips to Go! Compact Discs
- Doug Fahrman's job hunt
- Dischord Records releases by the Make-Up and the Crownhate Ruin
- Everything Jenny Toomey has ever recorded that I own
- Songs by Danielle Howle
- *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*
- Jake & Beth's wedding and impending youngster
- My dog, Ginger (whom I only see on occaisional weekends)
- TeePee's weekend chant
- Our FX mini-FM radio transmitter/portable CD player car stereo adaptor
- Jack Van Impe Presents
- Buying episodes of *Doctor Who*, *X-Files*, and assorted Japanese anime series on video
- Barqs Root Beer (the one with bite)
- Cluck-U-Chicken

Tina's List

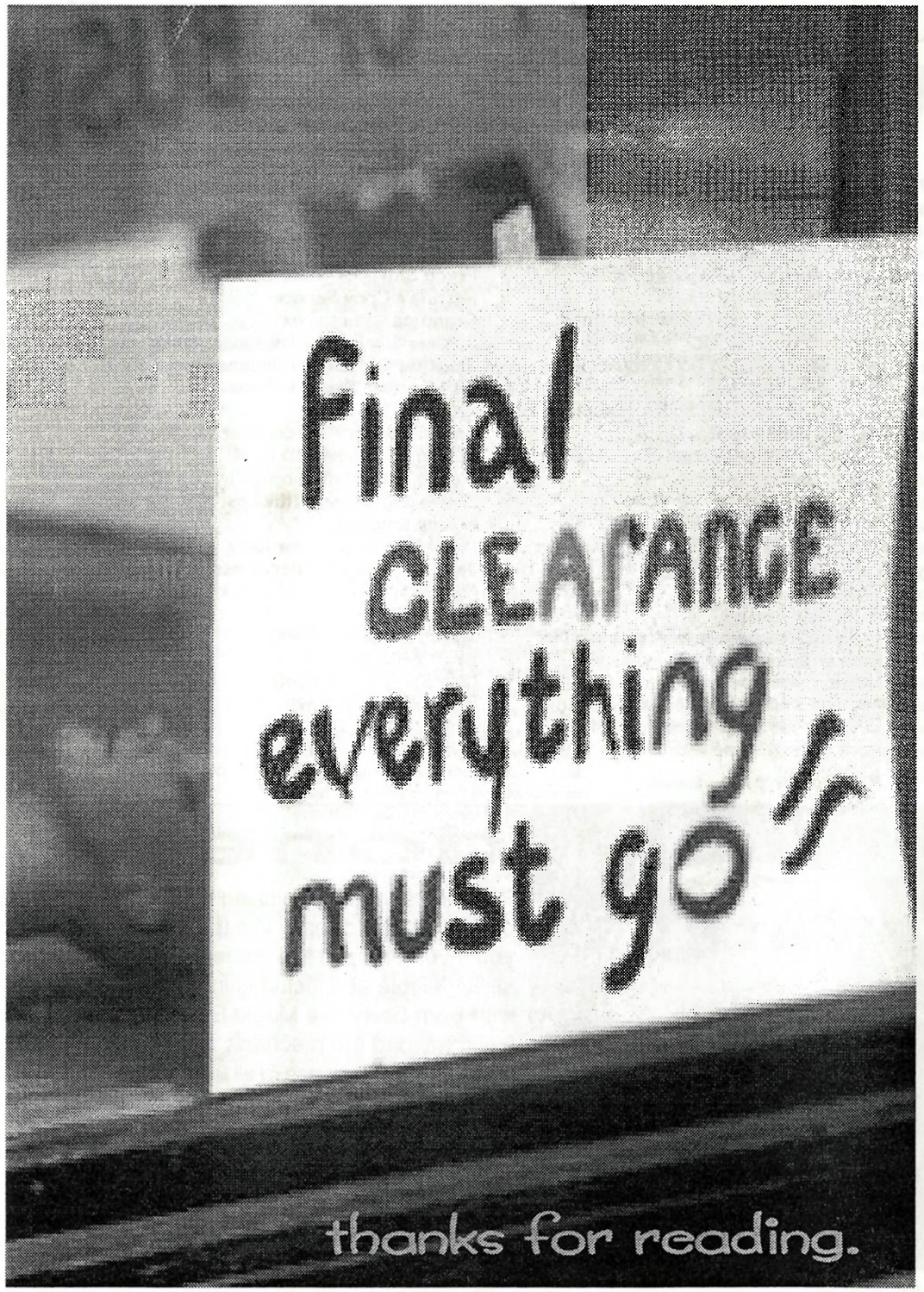
- Spit and a Half mailorder catalog (p.o. box 18510, Denver, CO 80218)
- Self-adhesive stamps
- Duct Tape
- Peach Slurpees
- Katrina's Copy Service
- Grandma's Photo box
- Softies, "It's Love" - fav song, *Alaska*
- Zaius tape- Punky's Dilemma tape
- PBS Special: *Signal to Noise*
- Charlie Rose Show
- Act II Popcorn - .29 cents at Walmart
- Gloworm *Glimmer* CD on K
- *Totally Fucked* mini comic by Jen Sbragia
- *Chungking Express* (the best film I've seen in a long time!)
- PowerToot zine mailorder
- Jean Luc Godard interview in June ish of *Film Comment*
- Cherry Coke
- Megan Kelso's *GirlHero*
- new Corm CD
- Late Night at the Apollo (the best thing on at 3 am on a Saturday!)
- new Holiday CD
- Jeff!
- Doug's willingness to bind, bind, bind!



done

Thanks so much for picking up our second issue. We'd really like to hear from you if you enjoyed this issue. RF #1 is still available and includes interviews with Pam Berry, the Magic Eye Singles folks, my dad the mechanic and so much more (50 pages in all with a most lovely cover!). You can get it from us for 3 clams ppd. #3 is due out in late December 1996. Thanks so much and please write soon.

Tina & Jeff (or Jeff & Tina) @RF
p.o. box 803, Greenbelt, Md 20768-0803


Final
CLEARANCE
everything
must go
thanks for reading.

2 ENVELOPES, EACH
YIELDS 24 OZ. OF SOUP
Doug Fahrman